

NOVELS BY CARLONE LEE HENTZ

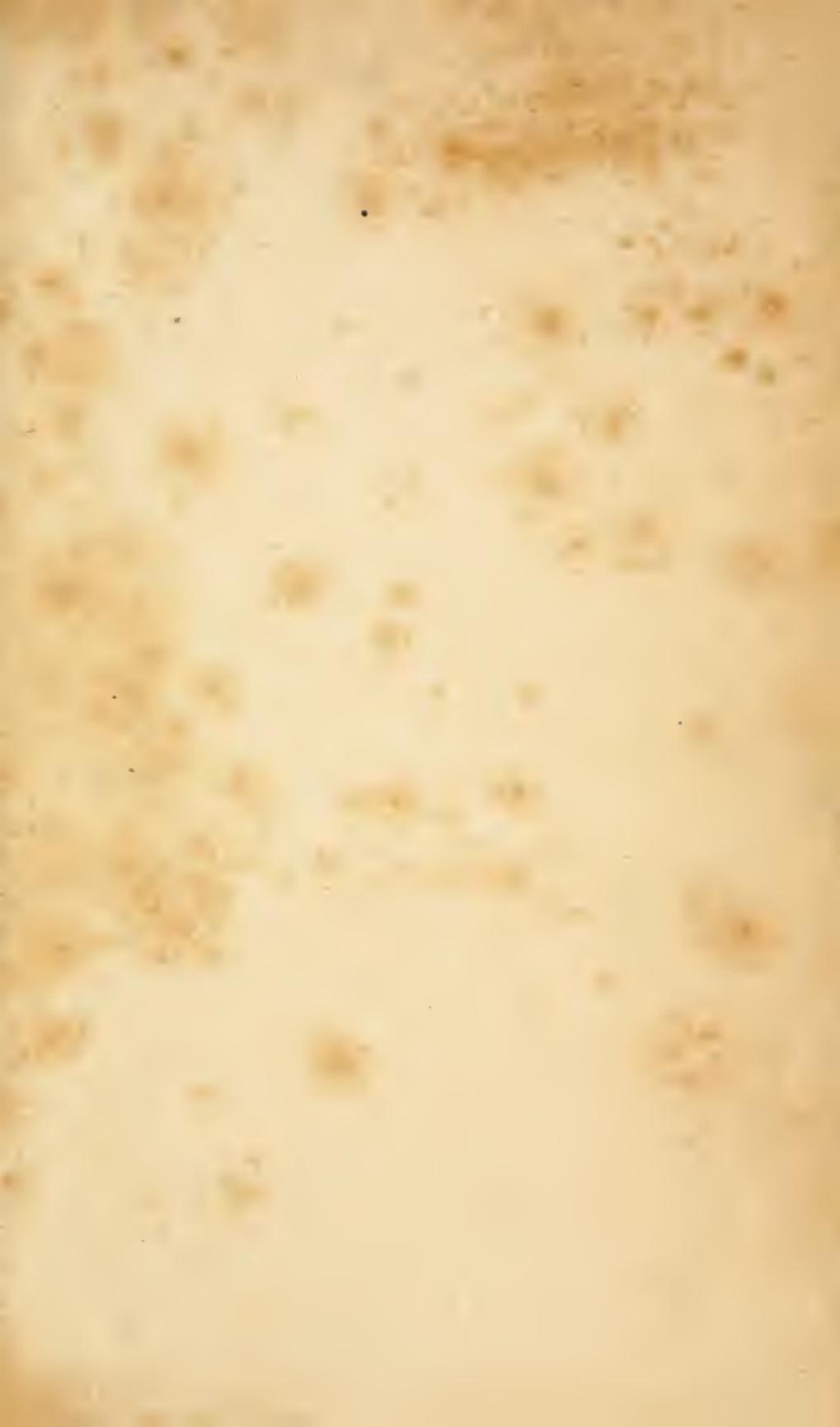
"He paid a less degree of attention to historical works, although he read Rollin and Gibbon while in business with Berry. He had a more pronounced fondness for fictitious literature, and read with evident relish Mrs. Lee Hentz's novels, which were very popular books in that day, and which were kindly loaned him by his friend A. V. Ellis. The latter was a prosperous and shrewd young merchant who had come up from Springfield and taken quite a fancy to Lincoln. The two slept together and Lincoln frequently assisted him in the store. He says that Lincoln was fond of short, spicy stories one and two columns long."

See Herndon's Lincoln, page 113, for above comment on Lincoln's taste in reading.

H. E. Barker

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A Sequel to Linda.

ROBERT GRAHAM.

A NOVEL.

BY

CAROLINE LEE HENTZ,

AUTHOR OF "THE PLANTER'S NORTHERN BRIDE," "RENA," "EOLINE," "MARCUS
WARLAND," ETC.

PHILADELPHIA:

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INTRODUCTION.

THE following pages contain a sequel to the history of "Linda and the Young Pilot of the Belle-Creole." Those familiar with the previous scenes of her life will need no key to understand the allusions to the past. A few words of explanation, however, may not be thought superfluous as introductory to the present work, for it may fall into the hands of some to whom it would otherwise be obscure and imperfect.

Mr. Walton, the father of Linda, when she was a very young child, married the mother of Robert Graham, a cruel and despotic woman. As a means of securing the fortune of the young heiress, she resolves upon her marriage with her son, then a headstrong and passionate boy. The persecution which Linda endures on this account, the manner in which she escapes them, the unconquerable passion of her step-brother, the heroism and gallantry of Roland Lee, the young pilot, whom she afterward marries, and the conversion of Robert Graham, are the leading incidents in the history of Linda.

We trust those who remember them will read with interest the continuation of her eventful career; and we entreat those who are strangers to her early history, to turn to the pages on which it is recorded before perusing the life of Robert Graham, that the triumph of religious principles, exemplified in his character, may be fully understood.



ROBERT GRAHAM.

CHAPTER I.

MOONLIGHT rests upon Pine Grove. The tall trees, whose number and stateliness give name to the darkly-shaded place, lift up their green tuft-knots to the skies, and the live oaks, with their long sweeping drapery of gray old moss, stretch their druid arms before the white-walled mansion.

Beneath the solemn shadows of the oaks and pines, a tall figure walks, pensive and lonely, its outlines alternately silvered by moonlight and darkened by shade; but they may still be recognised as the unrivalled lineaments of Robert Graham.

Years passed under the burning sun of an Indian clime have not dimmed the splendour of his manly beauty, or even darkened the whiteness of his marble brow. He has been on a holy mission, and if the face of the prophet shone, after being forty days on the mountain with the God of Israel, it is not strange that one, who had been for three years in daily, hourly intercourse with his Maker, should bear on his countenance the reflection of His excellent glory.

Yes! Robert Graham, having returned once more to his native land, sought the home of his boyhood, and the grave of his mother. His last act before embarking for a foreign clime was the erection of a monument to her memory, a twin obelisk to that which marked the spot where the mother of Linda was laid. Thither he now bent his footsteps, through the long dewy grass which overgrew the path in rank luxuriance. Negroes shun the place of graves, believing it thronged with the spirits of the dead; and it may be questioned if the gate

which led into this enclosure had been opened since Robert closed it on the evening of his departure. The damp weeds clung to his feet, and impeded his steps. A weeping willow, planted by her husband, swept its long branches over the grave of the first Mrs. Walton, and Linda's hand had set out a beautiful white rose tree, which was now full of neglected blossoms. At this moment it was snowing down its fragrant petals on the dark green turf, and the night wind, as it drifted the light flakes here and there, sighed softly in the mourner's ear. Yes, Robert stood there, a mourner—a brotherless, sisterless mourner—over the remains of her, who, though harsh and cold to all the rest of the world, had loved him, even to idolatry. He knew that she was odious to many, unlovely to all; that no blessings hallowed her death-slumbers; that no tears embalmed her memory, or kept it green and blooming in the heart. But surely she deserved to be mourned by him whom she had so fondly, so exclusively loved. Kneeling down by the marble column, and pressing his temples against the cold surface, he wept in the desolation of his soul. The stillness of the hour, the solemnity of the spot, the melancholy splendour of the night, the memories of the past, the isolation of his own destiny, all weighed upon his heart, and crushed it down to earth. He tried to lift his thoughts heavenward, but like the broken wings of a bird, they fluttered, incapable of rising.

Never before had he been so fully conscious of the solitariness of his position, never had he so yearned for human sympathy and kindred love. There are moments when the firm hands of Faith let go the sustaining anchor, and her lifted eye droops toward the dust; when devotion ceases to exalt, and hope to cheer; when the claims of the soul seem lost in the clamours of the craving, famishing heart. No food to fill the aching vacuum there. No fountain opened in the desert of life, to slake the unquenchable, burning thirst.

No one who had seen the young missionary, surrounded by his Indian proselytes, his eyes flashing, his cheeks glowing with

a Christian's enthusiasm and a martyr's zeal, so full of energy, vitality, and fire, would have recognised the same in the pale, subdued, and sorrowing man kneeling by that marble tomb.

It was not of his mother alone he thought. The one great sorrow of his life was awakened, and the wound that he believed time had healed, opened and bled afresh. Every thing reminded him of her whom he had loved so unwisely, so wildly, and so idolatrously. The dreams of his boyhood, the hopes of his manhood, revived and bloomed with momentary brightness, only to be blighted by the cold breath of reality, and swept rudely away. He thought he had learned to look upon Linda as the wife of another, to love her as a sister, to esteem her as a friend; but this one moment of self-abandonment, when the memories of years were concentrated in one pulse of the heart, convinced him, that though religion kept in vassalage the wild elements of human passion, they still existed in all their breadth, and length, and strength.

During three years he had devoted himself, heart and soul, to the conversion of the heathen. He had spent his days in toil and his nights in prayer. In the spirit of a sublime self-sacrifice, in the strength of a holy, earnest purpose, he had laboured, forgetful of himself in the mighty interests which he had espoused. In all this time, he had never yielded to the tempter's power. He had never loosened the girdle of self-denial; but with the word of inspiration in his hand, and its eloquence on his lips, he had gone on from strength to strength, and from glory to glory. Where were inspiration, strength, and glory now? Plunged in the gulf of memory. He was no longer the heaven-dedicated apostle, but the solitary, heart-stricken man.

"Where are the voices of home?" he cried, rising and gazing around him through the soft, glimmering, silvery atmosphere, while a slight shiver ran through his frame.

"Is this the joy of return? This the wanderer's welcome back, after years of absence, to his native land? Loneliness—

loneliness!—I seem to see the ghost of my former self gliding amid the shadows, multiplying as I gaze, like the images reflected from a broken mirror."

A noise at the gate caused him to turn his head. He could not help starting; for just above the white paling, a large, dark, ferocious-looking head rose, huge and massy as that of the Egyptian sphinx. He gazed one moment, then, with a feeling of joyous recognition, he sprang toward the gate.

"Bruno, Bruno!" he cried; "you have not then forgotten me."

A quick, eager, continued barking was the reply, while the great, quivering paws, pressing on the upper bars of the gate, endeavoured to accelerate his motions as he opened it. The moment he came in contact with his master's person, he bounded up in the air, as if about to leap on his neck and embrace him with his shaggy paws—then crouching to the ground, he licked his feet, laid his warm cheek heavily upon them, and turning his eye obliquely upward, looked in his face with the most earnest and intense expression.

Robert stooped down and patted the head of his dumb friend again and again. His chilled heart grew warm, while meeting these demonstrations of affectionate remembrance. Next to his fleet black horse, he had loved the magnificent Bruno. He was associated with Linda in his memory, who delighted in petting the noble brute. He passed his hand involuntarily round its neck, almost expecting to feel the withered leaves of the garlands with which she used to wreath his lion hair. The large, dark-brown eyes of the dog fixed upon him, seemed to ask after her, whom he had so faithfully guarded, and so affectionately loved.

"She is gone," said Robert, in answer to the beseeching glance; "we are alone, Bruno. The world is a lone place, Bruno, when there are none left to love us."

As Robert uttered these words, he found himself surrounded by a group of dark, smiling faces, whose expression belied the truth of the assertion. The loud barking of the dog had

roused the inmates of the nearest cabins, and the cry of "The Master is come!" resounded through the walls. The young minister had become an object of reverence as well as love, to those who had once regarded him with terror and aversion, and they crowded round him with demonstrations of joy and welcome, almost as boisterous as Bruno's. The missionary labours to which he had devoted himself consecrated him in their eyes. In imagination they beheld his brow encircled with the halo of the saint and the crown of the martyr. At first they thought they ought not to call him "Master Robert," as in old time; but habit triumphed over religious awe, and they were astonished to find how natural and easy it sounded.

Again a warm gush of emotion flowed into Robert's lonely heart, like the waters of the tide over the barren sands. Ungrateful being that he was! There were some objects of interest and affection left. His dog remembered and loved him. The negroes remembered him, and greeted him with enthusiastic joy; and looking up to the visible glory, he thought of Him the Invisible, who remembered and loved him, and he no longer felt alone.

The barred doors were thrown open, the shutters unclosed, and a light-wood fire kindled in the long-darkened fireplace. The late silent yard was alive with human beings. Robert threw himself into an easy chair, drawn up toward the fire expressly for his accommodation, and gazed around on the old familiar walls. Bruno, seated in the opposite corner, followed every motion of his master's eyes, as if sympathizing with the feelings they expressed.

It was an autumnal evening, and the contrast of the chilly night-air abroad, and the warmth diffused from the blazing pine-knots, was inexpressibly grateful. The occasional crackling of the fire had a sociable, comfortable sound, and the reflection of the glow on the polished and shining floor was rich and cheering. Linda's piano stood exactly where it formerly did, between the two front windows, covered with a scarlet cloth,

embroidered with black. The very songs he had last heard her play lay upon a little music-stand, under the window. On a small work-table, where she was accustomed to sit, a basket made of the dark-brown cones of the pine tree, and lined with satin, was placed just where it was years ago. The same picture adorned the walls—but how different they seemed! Those of Mr. Walton and his mother were covered with black crape, indicating the death of the originals. This mourning closed somewhat and softened the glaring colours and rude outlines of the portraits, and as they were surrounded by massy gilded frames, they were considered highly ornamental. There was one of Linda hung above the piano, in the costume of a shepherdess, with a crook in her hand and a lamb at her feet. It was taken while she was a school-girl, during the vacation she passed at home, by the same itinerant artist who had executed the other pictures. The painter considered it the most splendid manifestation of his genius, and had lavished on it an exuberance of taste that would have impoverished the great Italian masters. A blue skirt, with a pink bodice; a straw hat, trimmed with golden-coloured riband, and twined with a garland of variegated flowers, formed a costume whose gaudiness was enhanced, not relieved, by a background representing the most gorgeous sunset, behind clouds of crimson, purple, and orange. Had Linda been at home at the time of its completion, she would have checked this lavish profusion of colours; but she had only sat for the face, leaving the rest to the imagination of the artist. With merry laughter she greeted the caricature when it first met her sight, but begged it might be removed to the lumber-room, or put up in the corn-fields to frighten away the birds. Mrs. Walton resented the petition, declaring it a perfect likeness, only somewhat flattered; and as long as Linda remained, it served as an excellent foil for her own loveliness. Now, the beautiful original was not by to vindicate her outraged charms, Robert gazed upon it with indignation and disgust.

"'Tis mockery,—'tis sacrilege," he exclaimed; and starting up, he took down the picture, resolving to banish it by morning light, and turned its face to the wall. He felt better after he had done this, and the angel painted by memory smiled from the inverted frame.

The annunciation that a carriage was winding up the avenue, given by one of the excited negroes, sent him again into the open air. The hour was so late, and the mansion-house had been so long closed, that this annunciation had a startling effect. He could think of but *one* visitor, and his heart beat wildly, as he stood and watched each revolution of the wheels which brought the travellers nearer to the gate. He was so much agitated, that he could scarcely command his voice so as to call away Bruno, who was barking most vociferously in front of the horses. A faint scream from the carriage convinced him, that if it contained Linda, she was accompanied by a female companion, for *she* would never shriek at the bark of Bruno.

The carriage stopped at the large gate at the entrance of the yard, and Robert rapidly approached it. The door opened, and a gentleman descended, or rather bounded down the steps. With both hands extended, he sprang toward Robert, exclaiming,—

"Robert Graham, how I rejoice to see you! Do you not know me? Have you forgotten your old college chum, Henry Bellenden?"

"Forgotten him, no!" cried Robert, returning the cordial grasp of his hand with one of equal warmth. "When I forget him, may my right hand forget its cunning. Welcome to Pine Grove, sad and deserted as it is. But you are not alone."

"My sister is with me," replied Bellenden. "Poor girl! she is not very strong, and is completely jaded out by one long day's journey.—Julia," added he, jumping upon the lower step, and taking a young girl by the hand, whose figure, shawled, bonneted and veiled, was completely shrouded,—

"Julia, this is my friend, Robert Graham, of whom you have heard me so often speak."

As the little muffled figure bent forward in response to the bow with which Robert acknowledged the introduction, Bellenden caught it in his arms, as if it were an infant.

"Don't make a baby of me, brother," said a sweet-toned voice behind the veil; "I can walk, you know I can."

"You said just now you were too tired to breathe, and I am sure walking is a more laborious operation than breathing," replied her brother, placing her on the threshold of the mansion, which they had just reached. The blaze from the room illumined the hall, where several bright-faced negro girls waited to usher them into the parlour. The young girl, releasing herself from her brother's arms, stepped lightly forward, as if anxious to prove that there was an elastic principle within unbent by fatigue, but the moment she beheld the easy chair, she sank into its depths, with an audible "Thank heaven!"

Minta, one of aunt Judy's well-trained handmaids, assumed the station of honour behind her chair, asking her if she should not take her bonnet and shawl. The close vicinity of the negress, as well as her polite assiduities, seemed to disconcert the young traveller, for she shook her head, drew her veil closer over her face, and shrunk back still farther into the soft-cushioned chair. Thus baffling the gaze of curiosity, she sat leaning her head on her hand, which was so small, so white, and so beautiful in its outlines, it seemed a pledge of the loveliness of her features.

"You must pardon me," said Bellenden, "for having intruded upon you at this late hour so unexpectedly and so unceremoniously. The truth is, we are poor benighted travellers, looking for a place of rest. I knew you lived in this country, and came far out of my way to seek you; but did not know your locality, till a few miles back, when I was inquiring for the nearest house of entertainment, I was told I must ride twelve miles farther, unless I stopped at Mrs. Walton's, or Mr.

Graham's, rather. ‘Was it Mr. Robert Graham?’ I asked. ‘Yes, Mr. Robert Graham; but he was absent, he was gone to India. Perhaps I could get admittance, however, for the overseer and negroes were here, and if I announced myself as their master's friend it would be sufficient.’ Think of my joy, my gratitude, when I beheld your well-known figure approaching the carriage; for though I think you are taller and much altered since we parted on the steps of the Rotunda, there is something about Robert Graham which distinguishes him from all others.”

Here he again seized the hand of Robert, and shook it with true college vehemence.

“*You are unaltered,*” replied Robert, scanning with a glance of pleasure the bright, animated countenance, slight, spirited figure, and intellectual bearing of his friend. “I never saw any one retain so remarkably their youthfulness, even boyishness of appearance.”

“No reflection, I trust, on the inferiority of my size to yours,” said Bellenden, looking down on himself, and then upward to Robert's loftier height, while a slight shade passed over the beaming good-humour of his face. “The truth is, Graham, I do not like this extreme youthfulness of appearance. I would give half a kingdom, were it mine, for a little of your unvalued height.”

“I may have some advantage over you in a crowd,” said Robert, “but not at the fireside, not at the bar, not in any scene where mind prevails over matter. But I hear the bell that summons us to supper. I hope you are prepared to sit down with a traveller's appetite. Will not Miss Bellenden throw aside her bonnet and shawl? She will find a warm cup of tea or coffee the best antidote to fatigue.”

He advanced toward the chair as he spoke, where she languidly reclined, and stood by it, waiting her motion.

“Come, Julia,” said her brother, “you will not detain our host from the table, for he tells me that, like ourselves, he has

just arrived from a long journey. I do believe she is asleep," he added, bending over her, and lifting the veil from her face.

"No, indeed," said she, "only resting;" then rising, with a light, graceful motion, she threw back the large crimson shawl which enveloped her, untied her bonnet, which the waiting Minta eagerly received, and raising both hands, smoothed back the fair hair, which, disordered by the jolting of the carriage, fell too shadingly over her brow. It is impossible to conceive of a complexion more transcendently fair, and the soft redundancy of locks of paly gold seemed literally to gild this fairness. She might have looked too pale, too delicate, but the glow of the fire-light was warm upon her cheek. With the hand of a fairy, the foot of a Cinderella, and the form of a sylph, she combined, in appearance, the innocence of childhood with the grace of womanhood. Henry Bellenden glanced at Robert, as his sister emerged from her transient eclipse, assured the gaze of admiration must be riveted on her beauty. But there was something in the expression of his dark and serious eyes that baffled his scrutiny,—something he could not fathom. It was a "tablet of unutterable thoughts."

"I do not care for supper," said Julia, placing her hand on her brother's arm, "but I will go with you."

"You will care now, I am sure," said Henry, when they were ushered into a room as brilliantly lighted as the parlour, perfumed with the warm odours rising from a table covered with every thing that could tempt the most desiring appetite, for the negroes had been expecting their master, and reserving for him the luxuries of the plantation. "Why, this is a feast worthy of the gods, and I for one am prepared to do it justice. I never tasted finer coffee. It is perfectly inspiring. It imparts to the blood a generous fervour, and is only equalled by a goblet of Samian wine. Do you remember, Graham, that noble punch-bowl, in which we were wont to pledge each other at our college suppers, and which the class bequeathed to

me on its breaking up? I have it still. I carried it home with me, at the risk of its being broken in a thousand pieces, and on any great or glorious occasion I bring it forth, and hallow the memory of auld-lang-syne. Ah, college days, college days, Graham! The wine of life sparkled bright then on the beaker's brim, and we had not touched its lees."

"Methinks the wine still sparkles in your brimming cup," said Robert, as he met the bright, genial expression of Henry's warm blue eye. "It has not begun to effervesce."

"Between those college days and the present moment," replied Henry, and the warm light of his eyes grew suddenly cold, "there has been time for empires to wax and wane, though but a few fleeting years. What changes, then, may have taken place in the heart of men!"

There was a pause after this remark, which no one seemed disposed to break. Julia balanced her teaspoon on the edge of her cup, without tasting its contents. She looked weary and disconcerted, and shrank with evident embarrassment from the proper civilities of the servants. It was not strange that a young girl should feel oppressed with embarrassment on finding herself in the house of a stranger, the host a young and unmarried man, without mother or sister to welcome her, not a single white female for her companion and friend; and when that young girl was an invalid, yearning for sympathy and tenderness, and cherishing home-cares, it would have been stranger still, if she had not felt the desolation of home-sickness, which now banished her appetite and quenched her thirst. She was, moreover of Northern birth, and her unaccustomed eye had not yet become reconciled to the dark-hued Africans who surrounded her like the shadows of night. She thought of the gentle mother and loving sister whom she had left in her own bright home, and longed to be alone, that she might cry herself to sleep, like the homesick child she was. Yet she shrank from the anticipated loneliness of her chamber, and vainly wished that they had continued travelling the whole

moonlit night; then she would not have been separated from her brother. Every inexperienced young traveller in a strange land can understand and sympathize with her emotions, and never was a being more governed by the circumstances of the present moment, more impulsive in her feelings, or more sensitively delicate, than Julia Bellenden.

When Henry, in the warmth and anxiety of fraternal love, suggested a journey to the South, and a sojourn during the winter in some of its sweet orange bowers, far from northern snows and eastern blasts, she was almost wild with delight. She was willing to travel all the world over with Henry; and a visit to the land of flowers, was something of which she had dreamed, but never expected to realize. She was reconciled to the fragility of constitution which made it necessary for her to shun the deadly blasts which sweep over the Atlantic coast—she was buoyed up by the most gladdening hopes. Like all of ardent temperament, she was doomed to meet with disappointments, which she was unwilling to acknowledge. She had expected, as she advanced on her journey towards the South, to find her path literally strewed with roses, and every wildwood and “bushy dingle” resonant with the songs of birds, and radiant with their plumage. She expected, too, to find in the home of strangers the warmth and affection of her own.

More than once, during her journey, she had experienced the

“Yearning anguish of the stranger’s heart;”

and wished she had never left the shelter of her native home; but she had not yet rested in one of those tropical bowers where the spirit basks in the beams of perpetual summer. She was still a bird of passage, and her wings were fluttering for a downy nest.

CHAPTER II.

THE room appropriated to Julia's accommodation was the one occupied by Linda after her return from school. An air of youth, purity, and freshness breathed through the apartment. The white muslin drapery, relieved by festoons of rose colour; the carpet, with its pattern of roses, defined on a groundwork of shaded green; the decorations of the mantelpiece and toilet, reminded Julia of her own home-chamber, and she felt that the spirit of womanhood lingered there, though its presence was wanting.

"This was Miss Lindy's room," said Minta, smiling with gratification, as she noticed the approving glance of Julia.

"And who was Miss Linda?" asked the young traveller.

"La! don't you know?" exclaimed the girl, with a look of unaffected astonishment: "she was my young mistress; and the beautifullest, and sweetest, and smartest young lady there ever was in the world."

"Is she dead?" asked Julia, in a saddened tone.

"Oh! mercy, no; she's married, and lives way off, down the river, in Louisiana; and such a time as she had of it,—with old mistress and young master, 'fore she went off, nobody ever did have this side o' Jordan. But he ain't now what he was then, Master Robert ain't,—by a long deal; he's another sort of a person from what he used to be, since he got religion."

Julia's interest and curiosity were awakened by the remarks of the negro; but she thought it indelicate and dishonourable to take advantage of the loquacity of a servant, and become familiar with those family secrets which should be sacred from the stranger's knowledge. She repressed the

questions that rose to her lips, and endeavoured to show, by her silence, an indifference she was far from feeling. She spoke of other things; but it seemed that the chain of association connected with Linda was wound round every object, however remote, in the negro's mind, and drew her back with irresistible power.

"Perhaps you had better not speak of these things to a stranger,"—at length she said; "your master may not like it."

"Why, everybody knows it," replied Minta, laughing: "they didn't know nothing else, for a long time. 'Taint no secret, no more than the Bible is. If 'twas, I wouldn't say nothing, to save my life."

Julia, having satisfied her conscientious scruples, no longer resisted the communicativeness of her attendant, and, while the dark "bower-maiden" assisted her in preparing for rest, she yielded her ear to the thrilling story of Linda's persecutions, sufferings, and flight. It was scarcely possible for even the exaggerating imagination of a negro to enhance the romantic interest of such a history, and Minta's tongue grew more eloquent as the attention of her auditor became more riveted and intense. She prolonged her task, brushing the soft luxuriance of Julia's long, fair hair, till it shone like burnished gold, and watching, with triumphant delight, the flush of excitement dawning on her pale cheek, at a narrative so "passing strange, so wondrous pitiful."

When Julia retired to her couch, she could not sleep. She would scarcely have felt more excited, had she occupied the blood-stained chamber of Holyrood Palace, or the secret bower of the fair and poisoned Rosamond. The light from the sinking blaze of the chimney flickered on the walls, making fantastic shapes, which mingled strangely with the phantoms of her own kindled imagination. The image of the terrible step-mother stalked round her bed, fixing on her those hard and stony eyes, that sunk into her soul like rocks in a fountain's

depths. Then Robert Graham, not as she had seen him, subdued, lofty, and serene, but in his indomitable pride and fiery passions, "bright as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners," flashed upon her his powerful and mysterious eyes. Linda, the young and persecuted orphan,—the beautiful heiress, so wildly and romantically beloved, whose burning tears had so often bathed the pillow her own cheeks now pressed, and whose lonely sighs had echoed from those very walls,—appeared embodied before her in a form of more than mortal loveliness. Even in her dreams the same images pursued her, so distinctly marked, so vividly coloured, her spirit-eyes were dazzled and wearied by their straining gaze.

While Julia was listening with a fascinated ear to the wild romance of Robert's youth, he sat by the light-wood blaze at her brother's side, who called up, as if by magic, the genial memories of their college life. Both these young men possessed in an eminent degree the attributes which gain ascendancy over the popular mind, hence they were favourites with their classmates, and the leaders in their hours of relaxation and amusement. The very pride and passion of Robert's character, his recklessness, fearlessness, and prodigality, invested him with a regality and power which swayed them like a strong wind. A spendthrift of time and talent at one moment, he hoarded them at another with a miser's avarice. If he remained too long at the convivial feast, his lamp was sure to mingle its flame with the rays of the dawning day.

"Graham will fail in his morning recitation," was often prophesied by those who had revelled the preceding evening in the lavishness of his hospitality, and sparkled in the brilliancy of his wit. But it was never so; the fire kindled by the Promethean torch of Aristides was never extinguished, but burned an undecaying torch, lighting the steps of ambition to the Temple of Fame; ambition, born of love, nurtured by passion, goaded by the most maddening jealousy, and upheld by the strong arm of the most determined will.

But perhaps the greatest cause of his overmastering influence was the incommunicativeness of his nature, the combination of intellectual frankness with the most guarded closeness and mystery of the heart. He never talked of himself, of his hopes or wishes. Even to Henry Bellenden, his room companion and most intimate friend, he had never breathed the name of Linda. He would have deemed it sacrilege to her, degradation to himself. This was not owing so much to the sacred reverence of love, as to the dark reserve in which he wrapped his passionate and fiery character.

Henry Bellenden, the representative of a northern city in that southern institution, was as different from Robert Graham as morning is from night. It is a singular circumstance when a northern youth is sent to be educated at a southern college; but an uncle who resided in Virginia, within the shadow of Monticello's classic mount, and whom he was visiting, inspired him with an ardent desire to be associated with southern youth, whose character he felt to be congenial with his. And yet he was most powerfully attracted by qualities entirely opposite to his own. Frank and communicative himself, he admired the proud reserve of Robert's heart as much as the open display of the riches of his mind. Of a most sunny and unclouded temper, he loved to watch the clouds that often darkened Robert's, waiting for the burst of sunshine that so splendidly illumined them. In the whole course of their college life, nothing had arisen to interrupt the harmony of their friendship. Proud, imperious, and passionate as Robert then was, the shadow of his towering passions never fell on his friend. Perhaps it was owing to the conviction that they could never be rivals, that "as there is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon," so like the stars they differed from each other in glory. Had Henry crossed his path in love or fame, he would have felt the grapple of the lion roused from his lair; but in their diverging destinies no counter interests met, no selfish motives struggled. They had parted friends, but the correspondence, commenced at first with

youthful ardour, had died away, or rather it had been swallowed up in the vortex of Robert's master passion. Now they met as friends, and seated side by side, in the deep quietude of the midnight hour, they talked of bygone hours, and young as they were, wished they were boys once more, that they could begin life anew.

"And you are not married, Graham," said Henry, after a pause, which he had employed in perusing the downcast countenance of his friend: "with wealth and position like yours, with none to control or direct your will, I am surprised that you have been allowed to retain the gift of freedom."

"I shall never marry," replied Robert, without lifting his eyes from the flames on which they had been steadfastly fixed. "I shall travel through the wilderness of life with no gentle hand clasped in mine, or scattering flowers over its wintry waste. Once there was desolation in this thought, now there is peace. The fewer ties we have to bind us to earth, the easier our transition to heaven."

The deep feeling with which these words were uttered, convinced Henry that they came from the heart of the speaker. Could it be that one so splendidly endowed, both by nature and fortune, had loved in vain? Impossible. Had death blighted the blossoms of his hope, even as it had done his own? Had he been driven by treachery from his native land to India's burning clime? These questions, which in a cooler moment he would have repressed, rushed involuntarily from his lips.

"I cannot detail the past," answered Robert. "It would madden me. Enough, that I have loved, so vainly, so wildly, so destructively, that life was wellnigh the sacrifice at the altar of passion. But from the ashes of unrequited love and lost happiness arose a purer, holier flame. God accepted the offering of this rejected heart, and to him I have devoted my blighted youth, my energies, my wealth, my influence. I have adopted as my brothers and sisters the fallen sons and daugh-

ters of humanity. The more deeply I feel the duties and responsibilities involved in this great brotherhood, the more sensible I am of my own divine affiliation, of my unutterable debt to Him who raised me from the moral degradation in which my soul was plunged, and received me as a ministering servant at his altar."

The eyes of Robert, now raised and fixed upon the face of Henry, beamed with earnest truth and exalted fervour. Henry grasped his hand without speaking. Compassion, sympathy, admiration, and veneration, all swelled his heart, and alternately triumphed over each other.

"And you, my friend," said Robert; "sympathy so deep must be born of experience,—have you been happy?"

"I have known one year of happiness, followed by a night of sorrow. I have loved, wedded, and been widowed, since last we met."

"You! with that cloudless brow—that sunny countenance! Impossible!"

"It is even so. My nature is so elastic, it rebounds from the pressure of grief with a resilience that is almost miraculous. There was a time when the world seemed to me a dungeon of despair; but Hope smiled through the prison-bars, whispering of man's goodness and God's mercy, and told me I was an ingrate and a rebel. Then I walked forth under the blue sky and the warm sunshine, and felt the beauty and warmth sink into my softened heart. I was comforted. And now memory and hope meet as friends, and bless and hallow each other."

"Strange," said Robert, with impressive emphasis, "that one can be deeply wounded, yet wear no print of the scars! You will be happy again. Earth has many joys in reserve for you,—joys that will be more precious for the remembrance of past sorrows."

"And you, too, Graham. We are both equally young, but equal only in youth. In all other respects you have the ad-

vantage of me ; and if *I* am destined to enjoy happiness once more, *you* should look forward to a double portion."

Thus the two friends continued to converse, till the blaze in the chimney died away, leaving a bed of glowing coals, and the glowing coals faded and crumbled into dying embers, and cold, gray ashes.

Henry, yielding to the natural frankness of his nature, told the whole story of his youthful love and early bereavement. He *could* tell it, with a calm, though subdued voice, a serene, though serious eye. He could even smile at the recollection of departed joys. It is true, they were faded flowers, but they would bloom again. There was nothing peculiar in the history. A young girl, fair, delicate, and fragile, like his sister, but gifted with rare accomplishments and brilliant genius, was betrothed to him soon after he left college. Even then there was a prophetic rose on her cheek ; that deep, bright rose, the signet-seal of consumption. After one short year of wedded life she passed away, and he was left alone. His favourite sister, Julia, gave indications of the same fatal malady,—the flitting colour, the quick, panting breath, the occasional, short, dry cough. He had hastened to bear her from the "rigid North"—before the clutch of the destroyer had fastened on her heart.

Whither was he bearing her ? He had thought of St. Augustine when he left home ; some location in the land of flowers, where the gales were soft and bland, and the air played gently on frail and delicate lungs. He wished to consult his friend ; for he was very much like a bark launched on an unknown stream, waiting for the first favouring breeze to waft it to a safe haven, careless where it might be.

Robert listened and meditated. He thought of Louisiana, of Linda's fair, smiling home, embosomed in groves of oranges and bowers of roses. How cordially would she welcome Henry's gentle sister ! how kindly would she minister to

the fair young invalid ! Where could the Northern stranger find a lovelier resting-place ?

"Remain with me awhile," said he, "and I will accompany you to a spot where your sister can realize her fairest dreams of our Southern land. Having just returned, after a long absence, duty chains me here for a short time. I have a large plantation, and many slaves committed to my care,—whose interests are so interwoven with my own, that I cannot neglect the one without endangering the other. As I expect to render an account of my stewardship, I feel this responsibility very deeply. It called me back, for a time, from labours more remote, and gave me an abundant reason for leaving the field, whitened for the harvest, which the reaping angels are gathering in. Remain with me awhile, and I will be your guide and companion. It is the home of my own step-sister to which I invite you, and to which I pledge you a true and heart-warm welcome."

"A thousand thanks !" exclaimed Henry, enthusiastically. "This is beyond my most sanguine hopes. Remain ! yes—I would stay a hundred years, with such a prospect. A step-sister ! I never knew you had one, Graham. Poor little Julia ! how she will rejoice in this arrangement ! She has such a dread of strangers !"

The next morning, when he met Julia at the breakfast-table, he mentioned the propositions of Robert, expecting it would meet her joyful concurrence. He was surprised at the manner in which she received it. When he spoke of "the step-sister," to whose beautiful home they were so cordially invited, she started, and turned her eyes toward Robert quickly and earnestly ; then withdrawing them, a deepening blush suffused her face. The history narrated by Minta, which had peopled her dreams with such vivid images, all seemed concentrated in the name of step-sister ; and the thought of being domesticated with the hero and heroine of such a thrilling romance almost set her young brain on fire.

Robert, unconscious of the cause of her earnest glance, and the embarrassment which succeeded, felt his own face redden, as it always did when he knew himself an object of scrutiny or curiosity.

"I see how it is," cried Henry, laughing: "my little fastidious sister thinks it will not do for her to remain as the guest of a handsome young gentleman, who has neither wife, mother, nor sister, to assist him in bestowing the honours of hospitality. I did not think of that. But methinks the presence of her wise and venerable brother will make every thing very right and proper."

"Indeed, I think we had better go," said Julia, glad of the interpretation her brother had given of her embarrassment. "Pleasant as it would be to continue our journey under such auspices, I fear our prolonged stay would be an intrusion on the duties of our host."

"How much more considerate girls are than boys!" exclaimed Henry. "I never thought of that, either. We *must* be in the way—that is, she *must*. As for myself, I can roam over the plantation, plunge with you in the depths of the pine woods, and make myself familiar with all the mysteries of Southern life. But what can she do?"

"If Miss Bellenden will consent to remain," said Robert, "I will obviate every difficulty of that kind. Our neighbour, Mr. Marshall, one of our best friends, has a daughter, who will gladly be her companion during her stay. I will send an immediate invitation; and perhaps even you, Bellenden," added he, turning to Henry with a smile, "may find a charm in her society, to relieve the gloom and monotony of Pine Grove."

That smile! Julia felt illuminated by it. It was the first time she had seen a smile on the pensive features of Robert. Never had she beheld one which had such an irradiating influence on the human countenance. She wondered why he smiled so seldom, when it made him look so pre-eminently

handsome. She wondered how Linda could have resisted its fascination.

"Then it is decided," said Robert.

"The only objection which Julia could possibly urge being removed," replied Henry, "I think I may say, yes."

Thus they became the guests of the young master of Pine Grove, whose evergreen shades were once more animated by the presence of beauty and youth.

Nora Marshall had been, though somewhat younger, the companion of Linda's childhood, but they were educated at different schools, and Linda's after destiny separated her from all the associations of her childish years. Nora was sent to a Northern institution, and her elastic spirit, blooming health, and inexhaustible energy assimilated well to the life-giving, exhilarating elements around her.

It is not possible for a stronger contrast to exist than was presented in the person and character of Nora Marshall and Julia Bellenden. They each seemed the personification of their opposite latitudes. A stranger would believe that he beheld in the full, rounded, charmingly-developed figure of Nora, her sparkling, flashing, quick-glancing, dark eyes, the purplish blackness of her thick clustering hair, and the brilliant roses of her cheeks, a representative of the vigorous and blooming North. And in the slight and delicate form of Julia, the unsullied and infantine fairness of her complexion, the soft luxuriance of her light amber hair, and the clear sapphire of her gentle eyes, an emblem of the mild and sunny South.

It might almost be said of Nora that she "rioted in the madness of superfluous health;" for she seemed incapable of fatigue, as she was insensible to fear. The flow of her spirits was as full and unpausing as the ocean's waves; her voice clear and resonant as the tones of a silver bell stirred to gladden life's sluggish current of thought; and her laugh reminded one of the singing of many waters, as they sparkle in

the sunshine. If ever one revelled in the joy of motion, it was Nora. How she ever remained still in school was an inscrutable mystery. Where others walked, she danced; through the yard, across the hall, up the stairs, she danced and warbled too, as if life were a ball-room—a singing gallery—a perfect *sans souci*. Gay, dashing, merry Nora Marshall! The old negroes would shake their heads as she sparkled in their midst, and say—

“Poor child—she’s never seen trouble yet—but it will come, as sure as she’s born.”

The prophet voice which declared “that man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward,” finds its echo in every human heart, whether darkened by ignorance or enlightened by knowledge; and as in a bright, cloudless, glorious summer day, we look anxiously for the evening cloud, beyond the exuberance and fearlessness of youthful gayety we perceive the advancing shadows of life.

Julia was elastic, impulsive, but never gay. Gayety is seldom the accompaniment of extreme delicacy of constitution. The languid pulse does not prompt the bounding step or the ringing laugh. She was all grace and refinement and sensibility, the same in her hours of retirement as in the social circle. Her thoughts fitted through her mind, pure as the white cloud that floats over the ethereal blue.

“She looks too good for this world,” said experience, gazing on her youth—“she’s not destined for a long life.”

“I shall admire her, but I fear I shall not love her;” thought Julia, when she met for the first time the bright flashing glance of Nora.

“She is a pretty, gentle creature,” thought Nora, smiling at Julia’s blushing timidity, “but I fear she lacks spirit—she may win love, but not admiration.”

“She’s handsome, brilliant, spirited,” thought Henry, when he made his first bow to Nora, “but too dashing and independent for me. She may amuse and excite, but never interest.”

"He seems very intellectual, very animated," thought Nora, when introduced to Henry Bellenden, "but he is too slight, too feminine, to suit my taste. I never could tolerate a gentleman under six feet."

So much for first impressions !

The first day which Julia passed with her new acquaintance was not a happy one ; she was fatigued, oppressed, almost annihilated by the vehemence of Nora's convivial spirits. She felt very much as if a young colt had broken into the house, and that there was danger in its wild antics. The truth was, Nora led rather a lonely life, having few neighbours, no sister or youthful companion on whom her sparkling spirits could radiate with natural brightness. She was enchanted on the reception of Robert's invitation, and came, like a bottle of champagne, ready to effervesce in a thousand exhilarating diamonds. She had seen but very little of the stately Robert since a fellow pupil with him at the school of Aristides Longwood. Then she defied and tormented him, and laughed at the castigations for which the gentle Linda wept. As children, they were sworn enemies ; and though the animosities of childhood are soon forgotten and sometimes converted into genuine friendships, no youthful intercourse had given rise to warmer feelings. Robert never visited, and the incidents of his dark and stormy career, which lost nothing by the tongue of rumour, were not calculated to propitiate dislike or to inspire regard. She had no faith in the stability of his new principles ; even his departure to India was considered by her a splendid meteoric flight, a modern Hegira, to excite the wonder and the admiration of the gazing world. He was almost as much a stranger to her, now, as Henry and Julia, and she rejoiced in the opportunity of gratifying her curiosity, as well as manifesting her skepticisms in his saintliness and devotion.

"He is grand, magnificent, beautiful," said she to herself, as he greeted her with the kindness of an old friend, showing

an entire oblivion of all childish skirmishes; "but he need not think to awe me with his stupendous virtue; I will show him there is one who will dare to laugh, even under the shadow of his olympian brows."

Henry went abroad with Robert, and Julia was left alone with her vivid companion. Though Nora had really all the warmth of heart usually the accompaniment of high spirits, as she had never known a day's sickness, she could not sympathize in the languor which often made Julia seek the downy chair and the luxurious sofa. If any were sick enough to be confined to their bed, suffering from some manifest cause, and requiring nursing care, Nora would give the nightly watching and the daily ministration with all the untiring energy of her nature; but when they were well enough to sit, to walk, and eat, and appear as other people did, she could not conceive of their being sick. She thought all they required was the exercise of their own *will*, to be as full of buoyant, exulting life as herself.

She looked upon Julia as a little, tender creature, who had been petted and nursed almost to death, and who required only her own invigorating influence to obtain similar bloom and spirit.

"Come," said she, throwing one arm around Julia's waist, and lifting her with as little effort as she would blow a feather in the wind—"come, you must not sit moping in the house, like a caged bird. Take a run with me in the open air; it will bring the blood to your cheeks, and joy to your heart. Only *think* you are strong, and it will make you so."

Before Julia was aware, she was whirled out into the yard, and one of the most delicious breezes she had ever felt blew freshly and blandly on her cheeks. She could not keep up with the rapid motions and volant steps of Nora; but her light feet seemed borne up by the elasticity of the atmosphere, and the languid current of her veins quickened with new life. She admired the grandeur of the live-oaks—those high-priests

of the forest, in their sacerdotal mantles of moss, sweeping in the gale—trees, such as she had never seen in her Northern clime. She stood under their shadow with feelings of reverence and awe, as if some temple-arch were bending over her, thinking what a magnificent place it was to worship God,—when Nora, observing her grave and devout countenance, which struck her as exceedingly out of place, sprang up, caught a bough in her hand to which a detached garland of dead moss was hanging, and, tearing it off, she tossed it over Julia's head and upturned face, sprinkling her with the dust of the dry and brittle lace-work.

"What a pretty nun you would make!" exclaimed she; while Julia, smiling, though not particularly pleased at such a rude interruption to her reverential emotions, quietly released herself from the gray old veil. The dust, however, still lingered in her eyes, making her shed involuntary tears. Nora laughed excessively, without dreaming she had inflicted pain, and, skipping down a path winding along back of the house, she called on Julia to follow. This path, shaded on each side by evergreen shrubbery, was a cool and delightful avenue in the sultriness of a summer's day. Now, the dews of an autumnal morning lingered on the ground, and Julia would gladly have avoided the dampness; but she feared the ridicule of Nora, and preferred exposing herself to an atmosphere which might endanger her health, rather than meet the mocking glance of her bright, dark eye. At the termination of this path, a clear, cold, sparkling spring came gushing and bubbling from a moss-covered rock, into a basin scooped out to receive it. The water constantly dripped over the edge of the basin, forming a little pool around it, and singing all the time at its cool, monotonous work. A smooth, white gourd lay on a bench by the reservoir, and a rustic settee, constructed of interlaced oaken boughs, was placed on the opposite side.

"How beautiful!" exclaimed Julia, taking the gourd, and

filling it brimfull of water; "I never tasted any thing so deliciously cold and pure."

While bending her head over the gourd, Nora, who "seemed to watch a time to sin," stole softly behind her, and giving her elbow a sudden jerk, splashed the water over her head. Julia, whose footing was not very secure on the edge of the fountain, was precipitated forward, so that she stood ankle-deep in water. In endeavouring to save herself from falling, she caught hold of the side of the rocky basin,—while her hair, loosened from her comb, fell in liberated waves over her shoulders, and floated like lotus leaves on the surface of the fountain.

"Oh! thou beautiful mermaid," cried Nora, clapping her hands in genuine admiration; "make a looking-glass of the water, and see how charming you look!"

Julia did not smile at this practical joke. The contact of the cold water chilled her, and she did not like to be so rudely treated. She had always been carefully guarded from cold, and now she was forced into a bed of water, cold as ice, gurgling round her feet; the bottom of her dress saturated, and her hair dripping over her bosom. A fit of coughing, drowned in Nora's gushing laughter, brought a bright colour to her cheeks, but she shivered and trembled.

"Come," said Nora, fearing she had suffered her frolic-loving spirit to carry her rather too far, "don't be angry with me, and I will behave better next time. Come, let me help you out."

Julia turned from her, and, gathering up her wet robes, attempted to jump out unassisted: she was really afraid of the wild girl, and feared to trust herself in her hands. As she was in the act of springing out, the pebbles turned under her foot, and twisted her ankle. With a low shriek of pain, she fell forward, and Nora beheld her with dismay.

"Oh! what is the matter, Julia!" she exclaimed, stooping down, and raising her in her arms. "How are you hurt, you

poor, persecuted lambkin? Tell me what I have done. I did not mean to hurt you; indeed, I did not."

"I fear I have sprained my ankle," said Julia, faintly, her colour going out, and a wan hue stealing over her face; "but do not be distressed. It is a trifle."

"A trifle!" cried Nora, frightened at the deadly pallor of her countenance, and struck with remorse for her reckless folly. Catching her up in her arms, she flew up the path, across the yard, over the threshold, and into the house with the bound of the deer.

"Quick, quick!" she cried to the astonished negroes whom she encountered in the hall; "follow me to her room. Bring hartshorn,—cologne,—camphor,—cold water,—hot water,—every thing—to keep her from fainting. Make haste! Are you all stocks and stones? Don't you see I've killed her?"

"No, no," said Julia; "I am not killed, only hurt. Just lay me down on the sofa, and I shall be easier."

Transported at the sound of her voice, for she thought she had fainted, as she lay with her eyes closed, and looked so deadly pale,—Nora laid her down on a sofa in her chamber, and casting herself on her knees before her, half-smothered her with caresses, while the tears fell fast from her bright, penitent-looking eyes.

"Pray, forgive me," she cried; "though I cannot, will not forgive myself. I have been so frightened—oh, so frightened! I hardly knew how I reached the house. Oh, dear! I really fear I shall be the death of somebody yet, rude monster that I am."

Julia assured her, in the gentlest manner, of her entire forgiveness, declaring that the sprain was owing to her own perverseness in refusing her offered assistance. One of the negro women was employed in the mean time in drawing the shoe and stocking from her swollen foot and ankle, and applying cold bandages.

"Oh, what a shame!" exclaimed Nora, her grief and self-

condemnation bursting out afresh at the sight of the injury she had unwittingly caused to that little fairy foot; "I have made a prisoner of you,—a Chinese golden lily. You will not be able to walk a step for Heaven knows how long!"

"Do not, do not, I pray you, blame yourself so much," said Julia, gently drawing Nora's hand to her lips. "It was such a trifle, I am almost ashamed that it should have affected me so seriously. But it is astonishing how little I can bear. The slightest shock sometimes produces a fainting-fit—even the sight of flowing blood. How could you have imagined such a result?"

"But I need not have been such a rude wretch, such a rough, Greenland bear. I do not know what impelled me. The impulse was as quick and unpremeditated as a flash of lightning. I believe I have two beings in one; one always sinning, the other mourning over the sins, and trying to atone for them. You, poor little gentle lamb, how you must hate me!"

"Oh, no," said Julia, smiling, "I thought a little while ago—" She paused, and the colour came into her cheek.

"What did you think? that I was the most disagreeable, unfeeling, unfeminine hoyden that you ever saw? I know you did. Say it, for I deserve it. Yet I would not have you think me the two last. Disagreeable I may be, but really unfeeling and unfeminine, I should be grieved to have you think me."

"Nay, I do not think so. How can I think so now? I only thought, I only feared we could not harmonize; that *you*, so bright, so blooming, so rejoicing in health, could not sympathize with such a frail young thing as I am. Perhaps you do not know that I came to your beautiful clime in search of health, or rather to avoid the cold blasts of a Northern winter. Sister Mary, my brother's lovely wife, died of consumption, and my friends feared for me the same premature doom."

"Not *this* brother's wife?" exclaimed Nora.

"Yes. Henry married a year after he left college, even before he had completed his studies as a lawyer, and in one short year his beautiful young wife was laid in the grave. It is just two years since, or will be the coming winter."

"Why, he looks so boyishly young!" cried Nora, "so sunny-browed, so light-hearted—I cannot realize the truth of your words. A widower! how strange! I thought him a mere youth!"

"He is young, about the age of Mr. Graham, I believe. They were classmates in college, you know."

"Ah! Robert Graham looks like a man! so tall, so stately, with those magnificent eyes and that midnight-looking hair. What a boy he was! Good heavens, what a boy! He was always handsome, but such strong passions; and then his mother! such a woman. No, she was not a woman. She was a fiend, a dragon, a female Lucifer. How she treated poor, darling Linda. Oh! I must tell you of that."

In her own peculiar, wild, rambling manner, she related to Julia the history which she had already heard from Minta's eager tongue. She listened with increasing interest, and a belief in its truth which she had not been able to accord to Minta's first-told tale. Thus corroborated, it assumed the force of certainty, glowing with the colours of the most exalted romance.

The evening found Julia quite renovated, reclining on the parlour sofa *à la sultanee*, and Nora seated on a footstool at her side.

"Do not tell your brother what a savage I am," cried Nora, as Robert and Henry entered the parlour together. "He may not forgive me as sweetly as you have done. I am on my good behaviour now, and am going to try if I cannot be as gentle and meek as you are. If you chance to see the lion's foot under the fleece of the lamb, do not betray me."

Julia promised, but it was not ten minutes before Nora betrayed herself, with unconscious ingenuousness. She spoke

however of her rudeness with so much candour, and blamed herself with so much sincerity and severity, it was impossible to exercise a harsh judgment upon her, especially when the culprit was as brilliantly handsome as Nora was this evening. The self-restraint she imposed upon herself, in consequence of her determination to be *good*, gave the grace of propriety to her often too reckless manners, and then she was so kind, so tender to Julia! Henry looked upon her with admiring gratitude, when he saw her gathering all the cushions in the room, to make a kind of luxurious guard around her, drawing a foot-stove beneath her feet, and watching her as carefully as a mother would a child.

Yet who could help being kind to Julia? So gentle, so fair, so innocent and fragile! As she half reclined on the sofa, in her simple, white, childish-looking dress, confined round the waist by a blue riband, about the colour of her eyes—those soft, appealing, loving eyes, she reminded one of the angels of Raphael. The same, lovely, flowing contour defined her youthful face, the same fair, golden hair shed a pale glory over the spotless brow.

Robert looked upon her, and thought of Linda. Not that she resembled her, only as one beautiful being resembles another. Where she now was, Linda had often been, and the remembrance imparted a softness and sensibility to his countenance of which he was not aware. He felt interested in her as the sister of his friend. He pitied her, with such a blight hovering over her youth; and more than all, he was drawn toward her, as the child of his own heavenly Father, as united to him by the ties of a divine consanguinity. With these blended emotions warming his heart, he moved his chair close to the sofa where she reclined, and Julia, looking up with bashful pleasure, not unmixed with trepidation, met for the first time the full glance of his eyes. We have often spoken of the eyes of Robert, but it was only those who met their glance as Julia did, who could realize their wondrous power. You

have seen some deep stream at midnight, dark in its silent depths of shade, illumined by the distant starlight; you have seen a black storm-cloud rifted by lightning, and a torch flashing over a dark, fathomless abyss. The eyes of Robert, in moments of strong excitement, reminded one of all these; and when animated as they now were, with their best and purest expression, of lamps, burning before some holy shrine, through the misty incense of the frankincense and myrrh; of beacons, shining over the tempestuous billows of

“Stars on eternity’s ocean.”

Julia felt the blood flow with painful rapidity and warmth to her pale cheek, and she blushed still more deeply at this consciousness. She felt guilty for having listened to the history of his life, for having been told the secrets of his heart. It seemed to her that *he* must know it. He looked as if he had the power to read things unsearchable and unknown; and she was so transparent in her innocence and simplicity, how could he help reading *her*?

Henry sat by Nora, in an opposite part of the room, engaged in an exceedingly animated conversation, made up of brilliant nonsense, sportive wit, and a little sound, rational wisdom.

Robert, who had neither taste nor talent now for brilliant nonsense, talked to Julia in a lower, deeper tone, of what he thought would most interest her feelings and relieve her bashfulness. He led her on to describe her Northern home, her native scenes, so kindly and gently, that she found herself, to her own unutterable astonishment, speaking without embarrassment, and looking up without blushing to this awe-inspiring young man.

She even ventured to question him of his travels in foreign lands, and then she discovered how eloquent, how fascinating he could be. She felt as if she were wandering with him on the banks of the Ganges, “India’s coral strand,” and listen-

ing, from the ancient rivers and the spicy groves of the East, to hymns of adoration and prayers of faith, ascending above the burning pyre and the idolatrous shrine.

Julia never realized so fully before the mighty blessing of being born in a Christian land. With scarcely conscious gratitude, such as she felt for the sunshine and air of heaven diffused over all, she had basked in the light of Christianity, without reflecting on the awful shadows it had dispersed. She had been enlightened and protected by its divine institutions, without thinking of the deep degradation she had escaped.

Robert saw that her interest was awakened, and it pleased him. Without dwelling on himself, his sacrifices or labours, he continued the theme, till Nora's warning voice was heard reminding Julia that she was a slave to hours.

Julia heard the summons with surprise and regret, for never had an evening glided away more rapidly. She had a very humble self-estimation, and felt grateful to Robert for having devoted so much time to such a little insignificant creature as herself. She felt still more grateful to him, when he removed the footstool so cautiously from her feet, and assisted her to rise from her bed of cushions so kindly and protectingly, nor left her, till Henry's arm encircled her, ready to carry her through the hall to the door of her chamber.

At that moment she would not have exchanged the weakness that required such kindness and protection, for the exultant sense of health and vitality which animated the bosom of Nora Marshall.

"You need not stay," said Nora to Minta, when assisting Julia she entered their chamber, where every thing was prepared for their nightly rest.

"How nice every thing looks—how comfortable, how pleasant!" exclaimed Julia, looking gratefully at the mortified Minta, whose countenance brightened as she spoke. Indeed, every thing wore a most inviting aspect. The hearth shone like polished jasper in the ruddy glow that warmed it. The

white, smooth sheets were folded back from the swelling pillows; the white night-dresses were spread over chairs by the fireside; pure fresh water sparkled in the brimming ewers, and damask napkins hung in shining folds near the washstand.

"Why did you send her away?" asked Julia, as Minta closed the door.

"Because we have nothing for her to do, and I do not like listeners," replied Nora. "Strange that *I* should be cautious; but I always had an aversion to have a negro standing at the back of my chair, or waiting at my elbow. It makes me impatient."

"I do not like such close attendance either," said Julia; "but I feared her feelings might be hurt."

Nora laughed. "Oh, no! not by such a trifle. But tell me, Julia, have I not been very good to-night, according to my bond? I have no doubt your brother thinks I am quite a discreet young lady; and you, what do you think of our magnificent saintship of a host?"

"Do not speak in that light way. It sounds as if you were mocking at his piety and goodness. He is certainly very pleasing and very kind."

"Kind!—I should like to know what kindness there is in bowing his tall head and overshadowing such a sweet, fragrant lily as you are a whole evening? I have had serious thoughts of trying to captivate the young monk myself, but I foresee now a more formidable rival to the beautiful Linda. I believe," added the thoughtless girl, "I shall reserve the power of my charms for your blue-eyed widower brother."

This light badinage sounded like sacrilege to Julia's ear. She thought of Mary in her early grave, and sighed. Surely Henry would be forever constant to her memory. Love hallowed by death must be immortal. And Nora! even if Henry could love again, which was impossible, he never would think of one so entirely different to his delicate, intellectual, and gifted bride.

The allusion to Robert, in connection with herself, seemed more sacrilegious still. In whichever character she considered him, as the impassioned lover of Linda, or the Heaven-dedicated missionary, he seemed as remote from her as a lone and distant star shining above her, the key-stone in the bright arch of night.

CHAPTER III.

AND thus time passed away. During the day the young men were abroad, and the two girls were left to their own resources for enjoyment and occupation. Robert found so many duties requiring absolute presence and co-operation, that he was obliged to devote himself exclusively to them, and Henry was his fellow labourer as well as companion. There was novelty as well as excitement to the latter, in the superintendence of a plantation, the distribution of labour and reward among the negroes, the study of their character, and all that appertains peculiarly to life at the South.

As all this involved exercise in the open air, (and such a pure, enchanting, life-giving air it was,) and the daily practice of noble horsemanship, Henry greeted each dawning morning with enthusiasm, anticipating the renewal of the enjoyment of yesterday.

Julia, who recovered very rapidly from the effect of the accident at the spring, left to the companionship of Nora, passed much of her time in rambles in the neighbouring woods, swinging under the shade of the great live oaks, playing *graces* in the long wide hall, or tossing the feathery bird with the resounding battledores. There was no exercise or game requiring agility or dexterity in which Nora was not a proficient. Julia, who had been accustomed to yield to the oppression of

languor, believed herself incapable of any athletic exertion; but stimulated by the example of the graceful and spirited Nora, she endeavoured to imitate her; at first timidly, and consequently awkwardly, but at length, to her own surprise, she became expert, agile, and graceful as her teacher. Nora, though still wild and exuberant in her frolics, never exhibited any rudeness to Julia since her immersion in the fountain. She treated her with a gentleness which sometimes mortified Julia, fearing, as she did, that it was inspired by compassion,—yet she loved the impulsive and warm-hearted girl, and found an exhilaration in her society, like that imparted by the fresh morning breeze and the invigorating fragrance of the young pine woods. And Julia was to Nora, like the soft evening dew, or rather the gentle moonbeam, stealing over the rougher edges of her character, and making them smoother and lovelier from its own heavenly reflection.

But the evening hours were welcomed with increasing delight,—the hours which brought Robert and Henry within the sphere of their influence. Robert's lonely heart grew warm in the sunshine of friendship, and opened to the admission of social joys. He had thought he was henceforth to be a stranger to home-born pleasures; that he must regard himself only as a “pilgrim and a stranger on earth;” that the cold and silent walls of Pine Grove would never more echo to the notes of gladness or the voice of sociality. He had never dreamed of any one seeking him in his solitude, and, least of all, the friend from whom he was so widely separated. The presence of woman, too! how strange, how unreal it seemed!

When he returned at night, and entered the illuminated parlour, he saw it graced by forms of youth and beauty, such as would attract admiration in the most crowded and brilliant assembly,—how much more thus insulated and unrivalled! It was pleasant to meet the bright welcome of Nora's sparkling eye, still more the soft greeting of Julia's bashful smile,

fitting blush, and upward-beaming glance. He was not vain. He had been so when a boy; but the blight which had fallen on his love had withered his vanity, and in its stead Christian humility grew and blossomed. He now measured himself by a standard so high, that in comparison he must ever feel abased; and though the lofty aspect which nature had given him still conveyed to strangers the idea of pride, it was the pride which looks up in aspiration, not down in contempt.

He never dreamed of interpreting Julia's quick-changing colour and winning smiles to any sentiment flattering to himself. He was interested in her modesty, gentleness, and intelligence, and gratified that he had the power to interest *her*, by the earnest seriousness of his conversation. He thought not of exciting the emotions of her heart; he sought only to awaken the inherent energies of her soul.

Henry watched their growing intercourse with delight. Julia was not born for the ungenial North. Transplanted to the jessamine groves and magnolia bowers of the South, she would escape the doom so apt to fall on the fairest blossoms of her native clime. Robert, no longer brooding over the agonies of unrequited love, but happy in the affections of a pure and vestal heart, would take the position which God and nature intended in the social sphere. All this the brother and friend beheld, in perspective, with the ardour of friendship and the prescience of fraternal love. He cared not how long they lingered at Pine Grove. He was amused by the gayety and originality of Nora,—he admired her beauty, and liked her for her tenderness to Julia. In one way she interested—by never allowing him to maintain the same opinion of her more than ten minutes at a time. If at one moment she charmed by the unexpected good sense and grace of her remarks, she would utter something the next so giddy and childish it almost vexed him. If at one time she gratified his self-love by some indirect compliment or expression of interest and admiration, at another she wounded it by covert

sarcasm or avowed disapprobation. He was sensitive about his size : though exceedingly graceful, and finely formed, he was comparatively small ; and, as all men exult in the possession of physical power, he did not like to hear any remarks that implied a deficiency in him. Nora discovered this, and dwelt upon Robert's commanding height and splendid figure, till he imagined it impossible that she should admire any thing that was not formed on a grand and lofty scale. Then, again, she would declare that such men as Robert were only to be preferred on the battle-field, in the pulpit, or at the bar; they were never intended for the drawing-room, where grace, not power, held the ascendency. Nora was a brilliant enigma, that piqued his curiosity, and baffled his penetration ; but he said to himself, again and again, that if his widowed bosom could ever enshrine another idol, it could not, would not, be such a being as Nora Marshall.

"When are you young gentlemen going to relax in your selfish pursuits, and suffer our participation?" asked Nora, one evening. "We have exhausted our fund of out-door pleasures and in-door enjoyments. We have walked till every blade is worn away under our steps, swung till we have converted ourselves into living pendulums, and played graces till our elbows are crooked in a perpetual angle. *My* resources are exhausted ; and, if you cannot suggest a variety, I shall not take the trouble to rise to-morrow."

"I regret the necessity which has made us such uncourteous knights," replied Robert, smiling ; "but to-morrow we are at your service. 'Tis yours to command,—'tis ours to obey."

"Thank you," said Nora : "that is the first gallant speech I ever heard you utter. I hail it as an omen of a millennial day of courtesy and chivalry. Julia, do you ever ride on horseback?"

"Oh yes!" answered Julia, with animation ; "that is, I like it very much with a gentle horse."

"Gentle!" exclaimed Nora, her eyes flashing with excite-

ment. "I like them wild as the Arab steed of the desert, with a mane floating like a banner, and an eye blazing like a light-wood torch. Gentle! Oh! I never saw the horse yet too fiery or too wild for the guidance of this girlish hand."

She stretched out a white hand, sparkling with rings, that looked better fitted to press the ivory keys of a piano than to draw the iron bit.

"I should like to challenge you to a trial of speed," said Henry, admiring the spirited grace of her manner.

"You!" she exclaimed, laughing; "you might as well challenge the forked lightning. No; you had better take care of your gentle little sister, and leave the race to Mr. Graham and myself. Mounted on his Black Warrior, he sweeps over hill and dale, like the Wild Huntsman, or the Tempest King. I have no doubt that you can dance like an Apollo, and sing like an Orpheus; but I doubt if you can ride like a —like a—I forget—which of the gods were celebrated for their noble horsemanship?"

"If I am not mistaken," said Henry, his face glowing with a crimson hue, "Apollo is represented reining in the fiery steeds of the sun, showing that his talents were not limited to mere *dancing*."

"Your brother is angry," said Nora, in a lower voice to Julia. "What shall I do to propitiate him?"

"I never saw Henry angry," replied Julia; "but he may not like to be depreciated. He is considered a remarkably fine rider, I assure you."

"Mr. Bellenden was considered the best equestrian in college," said Robert; "and if he is not exceedingly degenerated, is worthy to be the escort of the Queen of the Amazons."

"Do you imply that I am an Amazon?" asked Nora, turning on him quite a belligerent glance.

"I imply nothing—I merely assert a fact regarding Mr. Bellenden; I yield to him the honour of entering the lists

with you, while I constitute myself the guardian of Miss Bellenden."

"I am not worthy of such an honour," replied Henry, with mock humility; "therefore, with due deference, positively decline it."

Nora bit her red lips, to keep back a saucy rejoinder. She saw she had wounded Henry's pride, and she was sorry. She had not intended to do so. She was perfectly sincere in the doubt she expressed. She thought, that one so formed to excel in the light graces of the drawing-room was probably deficient in the manlier exercises of the chase. Robert evidently preferred escorting Julia. *She* was thought competent to take care of herself; and so *she was*. Julia, delicate and timid, protected by both, was not equal to herself, with her undaunted spirit and immovable self-reliance.

"Well," she exclaimed, the transient shadow passing from her brow, and her countenance resuming its expression of radiant good-humour: "you shall both take care of Julia, leaving me to my own wild way. If I knew how to bridle my tongue as well as I do a horse, I should get along a great deal better than I do."

Here she looked penitently at Henry, who smiled in return one of his own hearty, genial smiles. He had one of those golden tempers which are incapable of corrosion or rust. He had spirit enough to resent, and kindness enough to forgive.

"One can scarcely regret passing the limits of caution," said Henry, "when candour comes so gracefully to the rescue. But can we obtain a horse sufficiently gentle for this confessedly coward sister of mine?"

"I have one, the gentlest of the gentle," said Nora: "so gentle I never ride her myself now. She is as white as a Northern snow-flake, with rosy nostrils and dove-like eyes. Julia could guide it with her silken sash. Her name is Fair-
Star. Oh! she is a perfect angel of a horse."

"But what will you ride yourself, Nora?" asked Julia, laughing at Nora's extravagant description.

"I!—I shall ride the Thunderbolt."

"The Thunderbolt! what a terrible name!"

"He is exactly what his name describes; a combination of splendour and terror. He is a young colt; just broken; black as midnight, with such a glorious mane and tail! The first time I mounted him he was without saddle or bridle. I made a bridle of his sweeping mane, and I sat in the hollow of his back, as easy as in a cradle. Oh! my sweet Julia, you Northern lassies"—

She stopped, laughed, and pressed her hand on her beautiful mouth.

"You must not judge them by me," said Julia; "I am but a poor specimen."

"You are a darling—that's what you are!" she cried, in the most childish, simple manner possible; "but you must go to bed now, like a good girl, so as to be bright and fresh on the morrow. Come, we will leave your brother and his Most Christian Majesty to settle all the preliminaries."

Trembling for the effect of her undaunted levity, Julia raised her eyes to Robert's face; but she read there only the mildest gravity, unshadowed by displeasure.

"How can you say such things to Mr. Graham?" asked Julia, reproachfully, when they were alone: "do you not fear to offend him?"

"Fear! I am not afraid of any one. I wish I were. I fear *you* more than any one else."

"Me! What strange opinions you do express. I wish I knew when you were serious."

"I am serious now. I fear you more, in your sweet, feminine timidity, shrinking modesty, and angelic purity, than a host of Robert Grahams, stately and imposing as he is. You are a silent, constant reproach to my rudeness and thoughtlessness. Do not shake that pretty head. It is true. I am

trying to imitate you, whether you believe it or not; but I cannot, any more than the wild-cat can resemble the dove. I did not intend to say any thing wounding to your brother, or wicked to Robert, to-night; but you heard what I did say, and I could not help it. What shall I do?"

She sat down on a low seat, and shaking her black hair into ripples over her shoulders, pushed it back from her right cheek, and leaned her head on her hand. She looked very thoughtful, serious, even pensive. One beautiful arm lay bare upon her lap, the other was covered with its usual drapery. Julia stole behind her; knelt down on the left side, and passed her arm softly round her bending neck. Her own hair was unbound, and it mingled its delicate, silky tresses with Nora's jetty locks. She certainly personified the angel of consideration,—not come to "whip the offending Adam" from the bosom of her friend, but to suggest pure and holy sentiments there.

"Remember the golden rule, dear Nora: then you would never say any thing to wound the feelings of another, and you would have nothing to regret afterward. It seems so simple, so easy."

"Easy to you, child," said Nora, putting both arms round Julia, and drawing her closer to her; "easy to you, who were made by the golden rule, and cannot depart from it. You know nothing of the promptings of such a wayward heart as mine. It is a mystery to myself. I have sometimes thought, I have sometimes dreamed,"—here she turned her dark eyes toward Julia, with an expression of awakened sensibility,—"that love alone could tame this wild, rebellious spirit. It seems to me, that the being whom I loved, if such there indeed were, could mould me, like melted wax, into the gentlest, most exquisite form. There are times when my heart aches from the fulness of feeling, waiting for a channel through which the living waters can flow. I have had so few to love, Julia. My mother died when I was very young. I never had a sister.

My father, though the kindest and best man in the world, is a man full of business and care. I have found more companionship with nature than any living being; but it is not in the woods, or by the fountains, one learns the restraints of social life. I have been left too much to myself."

"Let me be your sister, dear Nora," said Julia, charmed and deeply moved by Nora's unexpected sensibility. "I have left behind me one of the loveliest and best. Let me adopt you in her stead, during my exile from home."

"Take me, then, Julia, with all my faults, for you know not how dearly, how truly I can love you. But you are going to leave me, going to one who will efface every impression I may have made on your affections. When you once know Linda, you will care nothing for poor me."

"You must think me very poor in love. But why cannot you accompany us? I cannot think of parting with you so soon."

Nora's eyes sparkled through the moisture that had been gathering on their darkness.

"Do you indeed wish it? But your brother?"

"He would be delighted, like myself."

"But Robert?"

"You know you do not fear *him*," said Julia, smiling, "so you need not mention him. It would be such an act of kindness. If I should be very ill, who would nurse me so tenderly as you can do?"

"I will ask my father," said Nora. "I am a very dutiful child. I never do any thing without his consent, because," she added, laughing, "he always gives it. How soon do you think of leaving here?"

"As soon as Mr. Graham is ready."

"That would never be, unless he were going to accompany you. Why do you turn away so quickly, Julia? I did not say any thing wrong, then, did I?"

"No; only I do not wish you to think—I do not like you to suppose—I am sure you have no reason"—

Julia, confused and stammering, wishing to appear vexed, yet secretly pleased, avoided Nora's searching glance. In spite of all her efforts, her heart would palpitate with delight at the idea of Robert's wishing to retain her by his side.

"You need not shade your face so carefully with that golden veil of yours," said Nora. "The heart glows through it all; I see it even in the crimson ear that peeps from the gleaming fibres. You need not blush so guiltily. I should glory in such emotions. Ay, had Robert Graham shown as much interest in me as he has in you, I might have felt them too; but believe me, gentle Julia, my love will never be lavished in vain, for it will never be won unsought."

Julia gazed on this singular and exciting girl, wondering at the varying phases of her character, now admiring, now condemning, yet loving her through all. She had never met one like her, never imagined one like her. In the guarded precincts of her own home, her associates had been few, and selected most carefully by parental wisdom. Nora Marshall was, perhaps, the last person whom Mrs. Bellenden would have chosen as the companion of her daughter; but how seldom is it one can choose, for themselves or others. People are drifted together by the tide of circumstances, who have no affinity or mutual attraction; and those who seem to be twin-born souls are separated by barriers high as the mountains and deep as the seas.

Like a flower-petal cast by the wind on the waves, Julia was floating on to meet her destiny. Had she remained among her native scenes, she might have been borne on more tranquil waters, but would she have known greater happiness?

CHAPTER IV.

"Look, Julia, look!" exclaimed Nora, drawing Julia to the window as she spoke. "There they are. Are they not the most beautiful creatures you ever saw? There is the bright morning Fair-Star, white as a lily, soft as silk, and meek as a lamb. That is yours, but only see *mine*."

She pointed to two horses, handsomely caparisoned, which the negro grooms were leading to the door. Julia was not such an enthusiast on the subject as Nora, but she did admire a beautiful horse, and liked to ride when she could secure one particularly gentle, as she had said the evening before. She was charmed with the mild aspect of Fair-Star, who stood so perfectly still not a hair in her flowing mane or tail moved. She looked more like a beautiful milk-white statue than a living animal. But the Thunderbolt! his neck did indeed seem "clothed in thunder," above the rainbow's arch. The sunbeams flashed back from his shining flanks as from burnished ebony. His eyes looked like imprisoned lightning. He champed his bits, pawed the ground with his impatient feet, curved his superb neck, and shook his splendid mane. Nora gazed upon him with the proud delight with which the warrior looks upon the steed that cries *Aha!* to the battle, and that is to bear him through its smoke and din.

"Thunderbolt! my darling!" she cried, throwing up the sash, and rapping on the panes with her riding-whip, "bid your mistress good-morning."

The animal, recognising the voice of Nora, neighed, leaped, caracoled first one side, then the other, exhibiting a fierce beauty, which made Julia tremble as she gazed.

"Oh, Nora—you will not mount that fiery animal. You cannot restrain him—a man could scarcely do it."

"I have done it, child, and more than once. Waste no apprehensions on me. I shall be safer on that proud animal, than you on gentle Fair-Star's back, because I have no fears. Ah—there they come! Well, that does look like riding."

Nora's practised and observant eye saw at one glance that Henry was master of the horse which bore him, a handsome and spirited bay. He sat with ease, firmness, and grace—a manly grace that magnified his proportions, and invested them with the idea of athletic power.

"Your brother rides well, Julia—admirably—capitally. I have not done him justice—I will tell him so."

"Yes," answered Julia, whose eyes were fixed on another horseman, "splendidly. What a noble match his coal-black steed will make for yours! And well do you mate the gallant rider."

"Thank you, Julia, I was not speaking of him; but I do not wonder at your admiration. Desdemona told Othello, if he had a friend who wished to woo her, to bid him tell *his* story, and that would win her. I would have told him to ride such a horse, in such a manner, and conquest should be his."

Robert's appearance at this moment fully justified Nora's praise. His raven hair, blown back by the breeze, corresponded well with the glossy blackness of the horse's curling mane. His colour was raised, and his eyes flashed with unusual animation. The Black Warrior, a large, powerful, war-like-looking animal, that reminded one of a quiver of thunderbolts, if Nora's did of *one*, bowed his stately head and stepped daintily, as if unwilling to crush a worm that might be in its path while its master held the rein. Bruno followed majestically in the rear, indulging occasionally in a low growl of satisfaction, and glancing obliquely at the two charming figures, which now stood in the doorway.

Nora never looked half as handsome as in her riding-dress of forest green, sweeping far below her feet, hat and feathers of the same hue, heightening by contrast the rosy splendour of

her complexion, and corresponding to the leaf-work that surrounds the flower.

Julia was clothed in blue, darker than the blue of the sky, less deep than the dye of the indigo. It was the colour of the sea, seen from afar on a bright, sunny day, through the shades of an intervening wood. A black hat, with feathers gracefully falling, sat modestly on her light sunny hair, and enhanced the dazzling fairness of her complexion.

"*You are a pretty creature,*" cried Nora, as if suddenly struck by the beauty and fitness of her costume; "*you and Fair-Star were made on purpose for each other.*"

The young men dismounted and approached the door. Julia was full of trepidation, which she was ashamed to have observed, and endeavoured to conceal. She had been very little accustomed to riding, and she now wondered at her folly and temerity in thinking of going at all, especially with those whose skill and fearlessness shamed her cowardice and inexperience.

"I think you had better leave me behind," said she, when Robert led her to Fair-Star, and was about to assist her to mount. "I shall spoil all your enjoyment. I fear you think me very foolish, but indeed I cannot help it."

Robert felt her hand tremble, and knew there was no affection in her timidity.

"Your apprehensions will pass away the moment you commence riding," said he, in a reassuring tone. "Let me place you on the horse, ride several times round the yard, and then, if you decline going, I will not urge you. I think, however, you may trust yourself with me."

With one of his rare and magic smiles, he lifted her on Fair-Star's back, placed her foot in the stirrup and the bridle in her hand; and still gently holding the rein, led the animal, at first slowly, then with a more rapid step, along the path. It was a beautiful sight to see the Black Warrior following his master step by step, arching his neck with such an

air of graceful self-restraint, and treading as lightly as if shod with down instead of iron. Thus they went the whole circuit of the yard, Nora laughing all the time, and the negroes clustered near the gate, showing their white teeth.

"Shall I?" asked Robert, letting go the rein, and laying his hand on the mane of his own horse, "or shall I lead you round a second time?"

"Oh, no," replied Julia, smiling at her vanished fears, "I see how gentle and docile she is, and I am no longer afraid. I thank you for encouraging instead of laughing at me. But, indeed, you must not think of keeping pace with my slow motions. I know what a sacrifice it would be. Henry is accustomed to it, and will not mind it so much. I insist upon your riding on with Nora, and leaving me behind."

"Is it for my sake or your own you speak?" asked Robert. "If you really prefer riding with your brother, and think he will take care—better care of you, I will relinquish my place to him. If it is my pleasure you consult, I assure you, it consists in remaining where I am."

"It was yours, of course," said Julia, earnestly; "I could have no other motive."

She feared he might think her ungrateful, and no longer opposed his determination. She had made a magnanimous proposition, willing to have it accepted, but her heart throbbed with secret delight that it was refused; in such a manner, too: not with unmeaning gallantry, but an air of earnest sincerity, that left her no room to doubt his truth.

"We will let them lead," said Robert, springing into his saddle and drawing back so as to leave the pathway clear. "It is only making a grace of necessity, for Nora and the Thunderbolt would clear their passage through the live-oaks, if they impeded her way."

It was with rather a saucy smile that Henry bowed and held out his hand for Nora's springing foot.

"Is it thus the Pine-wood nymphs mount their gallant

steeds?" asked he, "or thus?" added he, bending on one knee and presenting it for a footstool for her ascent.

"Neither," answered Nora, glancing with a gay smile at the white hand so gracefully extended, gathering her green skirts in her left hand, and laying the other on the saddle bow, she vaulted into her seat with as much ease as Robert had done. "We mount like the birds of the air, and wing our way like them."

"Softly, darling, softly," she cried, as Thunderbolt leaped into the air, with a spring that would have shaken the timid Julia from her seat.

"You had better let me lead him through the gate," said Henry. "You cannot manage him alone, indeed you cannot."

"Touch him not," cried Nora, "touch him not, but let me go. Stay with Robert and Julia if you like, but follow me if you dare."

Away she flew, looking back and kissing her hand, her green plumes fluttering against the moss garlands, as she shot under the live-oak's boughs.

"Not so fast, fair fugitive, but I can overtake thee," cried Henry, darting after her with the speed of lightning.

"Go it, go it, Massa Robert!" exclaimed one of the negro grooms, rubbing his hands in an ecstasy of excitement; "neber let 'em beat you, massa."

But Robert lingered till the echo of the resounding hoofs died away on the ear, allaying Julia's awakened fears. She trembled, and turned of deadly paleness, as the reckless Nora and her brother flew by. She expected to see herself carried along at the same rapid rate, without her own volition,—she expected to see Robert whirled away with the same dizzying speed. But when, after a pause, she found herself moving gently from under the pine trees outside the gate, into a smooth, level path, with Robert still at her side, the Black Warrior obeying his guidance with the docility of a tame fawn, she began to feel the comfort of safety, and the exhilaration of mo-

tion. There was something so novel, so rural, in riding through the woods instead of a travelled highway; something so lonely, yet romantic, it pleased her fresh young nature. She felt so much better, so much happier, than she did when she first came, she wondered what had become of her heart-yearnings and home-sickness, her awe of her young host. She wondered if the skies were indeed brighter than in her Northern clime, the moon fairer, the flowers sweeter, or whether a new spring was blooming in her heart. As they rode along, with a gradually quickening pace, Robert became silent, and Julia noticed that his brow saddened. He had rode through those woods too often with Linda, in his more boyish days, not to have memory busy with his thoughts; and memory was always barbed with remorse when it brought her image to his mind. Julia divined the subject of his reverie, and looked into the green aisles of the woods, that she might not intrude on the mystery of his meditations. Deeply she pitied him for his blighted hopes, and her heart rose against Linda for having doomed him to the misery of unrequited love. She could not believe that Roland Lee was worthy of the preference, forgetting that the Robert Graham whom she knew was very different from the youth whom Linda dreaded and shunned. She had never felt before what a sad thing it was to love, and love in vain. Death seemed preferable to such a doom.

"No," thought she, stealing a glance at Robert's veiled countenance, for he was looking down, and the shadow of his long, dark lashes saddened his cheek, "I would far rather die in early youth, fade in the springtime of life, scorched by consumption's hectic breath, than live to wither away, consumed by the slow and wasting fires of disregarded love."

She sighed, and Robert, starting from his reverie, turned and met her wistful, sympathizing glance. "Forgive my moodiness," said he, struck by the peculiar expression of her countenance. "For a moment I was lost in the memories of the past. I am not very old, yet it seems as if I had lived

centuries. The shadows of bygone years sweep by me, in these familiar paths, extinguishing with momentary gloom the brightness of the present. Believe me, I am not ungrateful for the happiness of having such a companion, debarred as I have lately been from all social joys. I feel, however, so deficient in every power to please and interest a young maiden like yourself, that I sometimes fear you will think of me as a misanthropist or cynic. Are you weary?"

"No," replied Julia, "I seem to gather strength as I ride. It seems to me I could ride any distance."

"But you must remember the return, and not venture too far."

"But where are Nora and my brother? Where do you suppose they have flown to?"

"It is impossible to tell where the Thunderbolt may bear her, but there can be no danger on this level road. As our movements are entirely independent of theirs, we need not think of them at all."

Julia found it too easy not to think of any thing but Robert, who now exerted all his powers of pleasing, to make up for the involuntary wandering of his thoughts. He could not talk long or earnestly without imparting to his conversation a heavenly glow, which warmed the heart of the hearer. Julia felt that speech was a divine gift, thus improved, and thoughts of her own, which had been hidden in her soul, deep as pearls in the ocean waves, came up like holy revealings, and found spontaneous utterance. She had been so accustomed to hear people talk of indifferent subjects, of men and women, and houses and lands, or of books and authors, and all the usual topics of the day, it sounded strange, when the soul and its glorious attributes, its undying interests and immortal destiny, when God and eternity, were made the themes of conversation; not brought forward with mock solemnity, fanatical zeal, or elaborate formality, but introduced with simplicity and grace, and dwelt upon with an eloquence born of truth and religion.

Julia was full of religious feeling. She was the child of Christian parents, and had been educated according to Christian principles; but she had always believed that holy thoughts and devout aspirations were to be enshrined in the most guarded recesses of the soul, like the golden vessels of the Lord in the ancient Jewish temples. The name of God was too great, too glorious, too awful to be mentioned but in prayer, and heaven a place of distant and mysterious glory. But Robert spoke of these, with reverence, it is true, but with the same ease as he conversed of the beauties of nature or the wonders of art, and Julia felt drawn toward him by a new and holy attraction. Though from her youth, and the extreme delicacy of her health, she had mingled but little in the fashionable world, she had listened to the usual topics with which young gentlemen seek to interest the ears of beauty, and felt how little calculated they were to meet the demands of the intellect, or the cravings of the heart. Words were uttered of pleasing sound, but no thought suggested to the mind, no feeling awakened in the soul. Now mind and heart were both aroused, as by the wand of an enchantress; and like Abraham, when he discovered that angels had slept in his tent, she was astonished to find what bosom-guests she had entertained unawares.

Their progress was suddenly impeded by two immense pine trees that had fallen from opposite sides of the road across their path. They were old, blighted, girdled trees,—an aged couple, that, having weathered many a stormy day together, sank side by side into the repose of death.

“Ah!” exclaimed Robert, “here are some of the trophies of time, gathered during my absence. I have not travelled this road since my return, and believed it unobstructed. But where can our companions have gone? They could not have overcome such a barrier as this, and I see no other way by which they could have proceeded.”

As they had been riding so leisurely, the horses showed no

restlessness at this sudden interruption of their course. They stood perfectly still, gazing on the dead bodies of the trees, though the Black Warrior drew up his stately neck, and looked as if he would have spurned them with his hoofs, if his master would permit.

"What can have become of them?" cried Julia, looking anxiously round her, through the thick woods. "Is that water which I see on the right, gleaming in the distance? Is it a river or a lake?"

"It is a creek," he answered,—"Stony Creek; but it is as wide and deep as many of your Northern rivers."

"They cannot have gone in that direction. There is no road leading to it," cried Julia; her fears growing stronger, as she marked the anxious countenance of Robert.

"I cannot imagine what course they have taken," replied Robert; "but Nora knows the stream is too deep, and has too rapid a current to be forded, for a mile's distance. Reckless as she is, she would not rush into absolute danger. If you were willing that I should leave you a little while alone, I would ride to the banks of the creek and see if I can ascertain their course. I can find you a seat on one of the fallen trees, where you can rest and meditate till my return."

Had she consulted her own selfish feelings, Julia would have shrunk from remaining alone in the deep woods, even at noon-day; but she was anxious for her brother and Nora, and she could not refuse a request made by Robert.

"But how can you go?" asked she, when he had placed her carefully on a curving branch, that seemed formed expressly for a traveller's seat, and fastened Fair-Star to a neighbouring tree. "There is no pathway here. You will get into danger yourself, without finding them. Oh! what a wild place. How easy to be lost in these woods!"

There was something in the pale terror of Julia's countenance, the soft pleading of her earnest tones, that excited unwanted emotion in Robert's bosom. "You will get into danger

yourself!" she said, in such a sweet, thrilling tone. Did she really care whether he were in danger or not? Had he, the once rejected and unloved, the power to stir the deep fountain of feeling in a woman's breast?

"Fear not for me, Julia," he said, "nor for them either. There is no danger." It was the first time he had ever called her Julia, and it was an era in her life. She had always thought it a sweet name, but she had never known the full music of its sound before. He gave her hand a reassuring pressure. "God and his angels are watching over us all," cried he, looking up to heaven; then mounting his horse, he plunged into the woods, apparently cleaving them in his rapid course.

And where were Nora and Henry all this time? After Nora had flashed through the gate, and Henry to her ineffable surprise had overtaken her, she relaxed her speed a little, so that she could speak, for she loved to talk as well as she did to ride.

"Mr. Bellenden," said she, "I have not done you justice. You are a fine horseman, and I respect you."

"I am most happy in having earned your approbation. Your respect, having risen from the ashes of scorn, is doubly precious."

"Scorn! I know I am rude, but I defy you to prove me scornful."

"Oh! what a deal of scorn looked beautiful in the contempt of that lip, last night, when you bade me take care of my little, gentle sister, and leave to Mr. Graham and yourself the honours of horsemanship."

"Well, I begin to think you can ride as well as he does. Does that satisfy your vanity?"

"No: I would be first in your estimation. I am not vain, but proud."

"There is no distinction in that. All men are as proud as Lucifer, and as arbitrary—except my father. He is the only good man I know."

"If you knew me better," said Henry, laughing, "I have no doubt you would think me very good."

"Then I should not care any thing about you. I like good old folks, but good young ones are the most stupid beings in the world. That is the reason I do not try to be better myself."

"You speak of *assumed* goodness—which has no vitality, and is therefore cold and dull. Is Robert Graham less agreeable now, in his acknowledged goodness and piety, than when his passions were his masters instead of his vassals?"

"But he *has* passions; under his control, it is true; but they exist, and give him character and power. You can feel them in the glance of his eye, the tone of his voice, and in the loftiness of his carriage. Besides, I do not call him good."

"What do you call him?"

"No matter. He is very different from you. I wonder how you ever became friends."

"From the force of contrast, perhaps—upon the same principles that *we* shall become friends. In spite of your present mean opinions of mankind, I shall constrain you to think well of me."

"I never knew constraint in my life. I could not bear it. I have always had my own way."

"Has it made you happy—The undisputed dominion of your own wild will?"

"No!" she answered, in a tone of deep seriousness. "I would reverence the master-spirit with power to govern my own. I would kneel in humble prostration at such a shrine. I would bring to it oblations and offerings purer and richer than Eastern devotee ever knew."

Henry gazed upon her in surprise and admiration. Had the fountain of Hippocrene gushed up beneath his horse's feet, he could not have felt more astonished or delighted. He had thought her bright and sparkling, but cold as phosphorescent light. Her dark eyes glowed with the fervour of her feelings,

while the colour came and went on her warm cheek. Oh! that he could keep this wild and wayward creature in this charming, womanly mood! He opened his lips to speak, but hers parted again, and the spell was broken.

"I should despise any one whom I could rule," she exclaimed, with a disdainful air,—"even Thunderbolt, whom I almost adore, I sometimes hold in contempt, for being governed by this hand of mine. Come, then, Lightning-bearer; wake up, and show if you have any life or spirit left."

"Take care, Miss Marshall, he may redeem his character at a costly price to you. It is really unsafe to ride so like a tempest."

She only laughed and spurred her fiery steed. While they were riding at the most furious rate, they came suddenly to the fallen trees, which, being at the turning of the road, they had not perceived. The Thunderbolt reared his fore-feet, as if he would leap to the zenith, and Nora would have forced him on, had it been possible for him to spring over the barrier, without the risk of being placed in a ridiculous situation, that is, of being caught in the branches of the trees,—for it was the upper part of the pines that lay crossing each other, interlacing their gnarled boughs, and it presented a formidable bridge for a young lady to cross. The Southern forests are usually so open, that the equestrian can easily force his way, in any direction; but on the sides of the road beyond the crossing pines, there happened to be so many decaying gigantic trunks and old roots, charred and grim, with great serpent fangs writhing in the air, Henry resisted manfully Nora's determination to go on.

"We must return," said he; "I have practised leaping over bars and ditches, but this defies the Thunderbolt's passage."

"I cannot bear to go back," cried Nora, impatiently, trying in vain to check Thunderbolt's fiery motions. "I am sure we can make a nice path on this side."

"Indeed, you must not think of it," said Henry, positively.

"You will tear your dress, or what is worse shatter your bones. Your horse is not safe. I will not assume the responsibility of such a step."

He took hold of the bridle as he spoke, and attempted to turn the horse in the opposite direction, but like its mistress it had a strong will, and resisted his guidance. It leaped, shook its mane wrathfully, and at length darted off in a tangent, between the two opposing forces. On it went, tearing through the woods, gnawing against the trunks, tossing up clods of earth, and striking fire from the pebbles with its flying hoofs. Nora had no more control over him now than over the comet darting through the fields of air. Henry followed, though he could not keep up with her desperate speed. He saw the gleam of water right before them; he knew not how deep or strong the current might be, he knew not if a bridge spanned it, but whether deep or strong or bridgeless, there it was right before them, and they were rushing on, in a downward course, as if borne on the whirlwind's wing.

"Nora! Nora!" he shouted, maddened at the prospect of her danger, which he was unable to avert. His own horse was perfectly under his control, but he thought only of following her. On she went, onward, downward, to the very brink of the creek, whose current, broad, and deep, and strong, flowed over a rocky channel, as its name declared. Thunderbolt checked himself a moment on the brink, then giving a frightful plunge, almost disappeared from Henry's appalled gaze. Nora kept her seat, though only her arms and head were above the water. Her hands were getting numb from the straining of the muscles, and her face was white as marble; but she still held the reins with an unrelaxing grasp, unconscious that she was thus accelerating her doom. Dauntless as she was, she knew that death was beneath her in those cold, dark waters, and shriek after shriek burst from her pale, quivering lips.

Thunderbolt, feeling the tightening rein, which prevented

him from swimming, writhed frantically in the water, that foamed and seethed round his fiery and snorting nostrils, while his raven mane floated on the waves; then springing up, and rearing his head upright, his eyes rolling through the spray like burning coals, he plunged down again, and the waters closed, splashing, dashing, throwing up showers of foam, above the vortex he made. All this was the work of a moment, and while Henry was making maddening efforts to reach and save her. He saw that, instead of suffering the reins to float, and allowing herself to be drifted along on the swimming animal, she was endeavouring to restrain him, making him doubly furious, and bringing on herself inevitable destruction.

"Nora! for God's sake, let go the bridle, and grasp the mane!" he shouted, the sweat-drops of agony bursting out on his temples, for even as he shouted she went down, as in a boiling caldron. Then the glimpse of a green plume appeared like a leaf upon the water, the black head and reeking mane heaved up into sight, and Nora's dripping form still adhering to her terrible seat. "Nora, for God's sake, hear me! Let go the bridle, and grasp the mane!" loud as a clarion's tone, rung in her drowning ear. Despairingly, instinctively, her chill hands loosened from the rein, and clung to the wet tangles of the "thunder-clothed" mane. Her cold, white face drooped down on the coal-black neck, whose tresses now streamed like a banner on the waves. Passively, almost unconsciously, she yielded herself to her fate, feeling that mental collapse which follows a mighty struggle. Thunderbolt, finding himself free, obeyed like his mistress the instincts of nature, and swam to the shore, stemming the current, like a sea-born steed.

Nora, stunned, benumbed, bewildered, and almost unconscious, reeled from the saddle into the arms of Henry, who had reached the bank almost simultaneously, and sprang from his horse, ready to receive her. Poor Nora! where was her fearless, independent spirit now? There she lay, on the sandy bank, her head supported on Henry's arm, her misshapen hat

with its broken feathers fallen at her feet, the long folds of her dress, saturated and dripping, clinging to her and imprisoning her limbs, reduced to the helplessness and dependence of infancy.

Henry, wet and dripping himself, kneeling over her, with one arm confined by encircling her neck, was almost as powerless as herself. He was weak from the strain, the tension, the struggle of the last few moments, and he looked down on Nora with a face as pale as her own. As he had not been immersed like her, his fair locks waved freely round his temples in all their native grace and luxuriance. When Nora looked up, after rubbing her eyes to clear away the mist that obscured them, and saw him kneeling by her so protectingly and gracefully, while the echo of his warning accents still resounded in her ears, his countenance expressive of the most intense feeling, gratitude, admiration, and sensibility lighted up her every feature, and diffused over them the softest charm of womanhood. She raised herself on her elbow, shook back her drenched, heavy locks, and taking up Henry's white handkerchief with which he had wiped the moisture from her lately deluged face, pressed it against her heart.

Henry, quite transported by an act so graceful and feeling, was about to give utterance to a most romantic speech, when the wild, versatile creature looked down upon herself, and burst into a fit of laughter.

"Oh, Nora!" exclaimed Henry, perfectly shocked; "how can you laugh so, after escaping death so narrowly?—when every nerve in my frame is vibrating yet, and will long vibrate, at the remembrance of the danger you have incurred?"

"I cannot help it," cried Nora, trying to look sober, while a new fountain of mirth gushed forth. "I look so—we both look so—so funny. See my hat,—what an object!—all mashed and squeezed like a lemon. But, indeed, indeed, I am grateful—grateful to Heaven and you. Your warning

voice saved me. Oh, how it sounded! how it rung in my ears, as I came up from the cold, cold water. I thought I was going down, down, down—oh, it was awful!"

Shuddering and trembling, she covered her face with her hands; her bosom heaved, and Henry heard the sound of a suppressed sob. She was hysterical. She must either laugh or cry, and of the two it seemed more decorous, under existing circumstances, to do the last.

"Where is Thunderbolt?" she cried, trying to spring up; but her heavy skirt obliged her to rise very demurely, and not without Henry's assistance. "Where is the horrible monster?"

"He seems to be drying himself in the sun," said Henry, pointing to the "monster," where he stood at a little distance, all his fury spent, his sides shining and quivering, like the water in which his image was reflected.

"You beautiful tyrant, fiend angelical!" she exclaimed; "I thought I should hate you, and banish you forever; but I cannot resist your fascinations. Come hither, thou repenting prodigal, and let me mount thee. Quick, for I cannot stand drying myself in the sun like you, selfish wretch that you are!"

"You will not mount him again to-day, Nora; not with my permission."

"Your permission! Really, that does sound authoritative. Do you know to whom you are speaking?"

She looked at him with a bright, saucy, bewitching smile, as if defying his prohibition. In spite of her soiled and draggled dress; her wildly, clinging hair, streaming so dark and dishevelled over her neck and shoulders, she looked even radiantly handsome. Her eyes flashed with the light of excitement, and a brilliant colour had come back to her cheeks.

"I know that I am speaking to a *very* charming but wilful young lady, whose life is just now under my especial charge.

Nora, you must ride home with me. I shall not trust you by yourself again."

"Do you think I would make such a ridiculous figure of myself as to ride home behind you,—in this costume, too,—bareheaded likewise?" and stooping down, she picked up her poor wreck of a riding-cap, and tossed it into the creek. "Why, the very owls would come forth from their nests to hoot at us."

"I should feel prouder than I ever did in my life," said Henry, exultingly; "and as for yourself, you never looked half as handsome. You have no alternative, and a graceful compliance is always lovely in woman."

A strong and resolute will beamed from his clear, blue eye, and spoke in the proud curl of his smiling lips. Perhaps Nora had really been too much frightened to wish to commit herself again to Thunderbolt's power; perhaps she felt more truly than she had ever done before her dependence as a woman, and her accessibility to persuasion; for she suffered Henry to take her hand, and lead her toward his horse, which had behaved most nobly during the whole of the exciting scene.

As Henry turned in search of a position more favourable than the one at present occupied, for Nora to mount,—as he was compelled to take his seat first, in spite of his chivalry of feeling,—Robert came galloping to the spot, the Black Warrior flushed with the foam of speed.

"Thank heaven! you are safe," he cried, understanding from the first glance the danger they had incurred and escaped. "Thank heaven! it is no worse."

"What have you done with Julia?" asked Henry. "Surely no accident has befallen her?"

"I left her in the forest shades, while I came to relieve her anxiety on your account."

"Let us hasten, then," said Henry, "for I know her poor, little coward heart is palpitating with untold fears. Assist

Nora to take a seat behind me. Can you not lead Thunderbolt by the bridle? He is subdued now."

Yes; he was subdued. Nora turned away, quick as lightning, smiles kindling in her eyes. He was gentle now. Henry had said so. It was enough. The water had quenched his blazing spirit, and, after all, he was a glorious beast! It is impossible to describe the mortification she had felt, when Robert approached to assist her in mounting, as Henry directed. She was a dethroned queen—a Zenobia, bound in golden chains to Aurelian's chariot wheels. What! ride home behind a young gentleman whose horsemanship she had dared to question, while to his superior knowledge of the art she owed the salvation of her life, with her arm tucked tight round his waist, her feet swinging out of the stirrups, like a country market girl! No, indeed; not she.

"Yes," said she, resuming her gay, undaunted air; "he says right. He is manageable now. I *will* ride him. Lead him hither, if you please, Robert, and I will show him that he has not made me a craven yet."

Robert, believing that there was no danger of his running away again, and knowing that Nora would have her own way, obeyed her mandate, while he could not help smiling at Henry's disconcerted countenance.

"Ah! Graham," exclaimed he, as Nora nodded triumphantly at him, enthroned once more on Thunderbolt's back; "you have robbed me of my well-earned honours. Why did you come, at the moment of victory, to snatch from me such a glorious trophy?"

"To win from me ten thousand thanks," said Nora. "*His* confidence is not shaken by my temporary downfall. I will not abuse it, but hold the reins with a hand as kind and gentle as Julia's. Go on, and let me follow for once in my life."

It would be difficult to decide which was the more amiable and docile during their homeward ride, Thunderbolt or his mistress. As they approached the spot where Julia sat on

the old gray trunk, she leaned forward and touched Robert on the arm.

"Ride slowly. What a beautiful, beautiful picture!"

It was beautiful. The ancient, picturesque seat; the fair, young figure, whose garments of flowing blue contrasted charmingly with the dim hue of the bark; the milk-white steed, patiently waiting in the evergreen shade close by; the soft, mellow brightness of the autumnal heavens; the misty splendour of the Indian-summer atmosphere; the deep quietude and loneliness of the spot—all harmonized so perfectly, and formed a scene so lovely and serene, it seemed a pity to disturb it by the sound of trampling hoofs and the echo of human voices.

These sounds, however, were music to Julia's waiting ears. The grandeur of the forest solitude oppressed her. The deep, monotonous murmur of the rustling pines, so like the distant roaring of the ocean surf; the "boundless contiguity of shade," girdling the horizon; the quick, audible pulsations of her own heart—conveyed to her the idea of unceasing sound, immeasurable space, and eternal restlessness.

The quick and ever-dancing current of Nora's veins and the exercise of managing Thunderbolt,—who, in his most quiescent state, seemed charged with electricity,—neutralized the effect of her cold bath. She laughed at Julia's terror lest Henry and herself should catch a death-cold, and rode on through the shades that seemed to melt away before her brightness,—an occasional sunbeam struggling through and glancing on her long, black hair, that flowed like a satin mantle round her. When she came to Pine Grove she accelerated her pace, and went dashing up to the door in her usual wild way; and the negroes thought she had only taken off her hat in a frolic.

"Is not this better than following your advice?" said she to Henry, jumping from her horse before he had time to assist her.

"Which do you believe was my object?" he asked; "*your* safety, or *my* triumph?"

"Both, if I can read countenances right."

"Well; the first is achieved, and I rejoice. The last will yet be accomplished."

Thus lightly talking, but deeply feeling, the two rescued ones crossed the threshold.

CHAPTER V.

TIME glided rapidly away at Pine Grove, and the Northern travellers spoke of renewing their journey.

"Remain a little longer," was the invariable reply when Henry mentioned the necessity of leaving. "The weather is so delightful, so balmy, there is no need of seeking a warmer latitude. Spend your Indian summer here, and then it will be time enough to wend your way to Louisiana's more southern bowers. Your sister is gaining strength and colour from day to day."

"But you are going with us!" said Henry; "we shall not be separated. Your step-sister will hardly give us a welcome, if, by our longer stay here, we deprive her of the happiness of seeing you."

Julia no longer looked at Robert when the name of Linda was mentioned. A feeling that she could not define made her involuntarily avert her eyes, and repress the rising sigh. She would gladly have responded to the wish, that their stay might be prolonged, but she dared not do so, fearing it would be thought forward and bold. She had become so happy where she was. Robert was so kind and attentive, so thoughtful of her health, so lenient to her weakness and fears, and all the time her soul was rising and enlarging so under his

powerful influence ; she never thought of her heart, but she knew that he was the master of her soul. Strange, but she felt such a shrinking at the thought of meeting Linda, whom at first, if she had had wings, she would have flown to behold. Was it a fear of losing those daily assiduities which seemed now a part of her existence ? Was it the dread of being supplanted, annihilated, forgotten ? Oh, no ; Linda, the wife of another, could never be looked upon as a rival. The high-principled and religious Robert would despise her for such a suggestion.

And did not Robert really wish to hasten the moment, when he should meet once more her whom he had so madly loved, so magnanimously renounced ? Were the remembrances, which had swept over him like a mighty wind while kneeling by his mother's tomb, gone with the night-breeze which then fanned his brow ? Had the impression made by the fair and gentle stranger effaced those prints on the sands of memory which seemed indelible as traces graven on steel or granite ? No ! Robert had loved Linda, as only the strong in mind, the vehement in passion, the warm in heart, the serious, the earnest, the really heroic can love ; and such love is never forgotten. It was a golden cable too strong to be broken, too indestructible for decay ; a sheet-anchor to which even in death his spirit would cling. But this love was now purified from the dross of passion or the alloy of selfishness. He himself had united her to Roland Lee, and never for one moment had he regretted an act consecrated by feelings of sublime self-sacrifice. He had departed immediately to a distant clime with his spiritual father, the excellent and beloved Rayner, and entered at once on the labours of a missionary with all the enthusiasm and passion of his nature. In the zeal of the Christian he merged the disappointments of the man, and in fervent aspirations to heaven ceased to murmur at the dispensations which had blighted the hopes of his opening manhood.

He came back to the home of his youth, and the conscious-

ness of his lonely fate pressed coldly and heavily on his heart. He believed himself cut off forever from the genial sympathies and tender charities of domestic and social life by the Bastile bars of an iron destiny. As if under the especial direction of a relenting Providence, a being came to cheer by woman's sweetest attributes his joyless home. She stole so gently on his interest, he was hardly aware of it, save by the void he felt in her absence. So modest and unobtrusive, so delicate and sensitive, so childlike and yet so womanly, she twined herself round the rougher frame of his character, like the slender tendrils of the vine, whose fibres, at first so frail and light as to be agitated by a breath, become strong and inflexible as oak. He had never known what it was to inspire love in woman. He thought there was something repelling in him that distanced love. But he could not help perceiving that Julia's beautiful blue eyes kindled into brighter radiance at his approach, and that her cheek, usually as pale and pure as her own Northern snows, then glowed with a rose-colour coming and going and coming again, messenger of the bashful heart. He could not help being conscious, that whenever he spoke, she always listened, though others might be talking louder and nearer; that the simplest act of courtesy from him was received with grateful emotions; and that in all her bearing to him there was a grace, a deference, a humility, combined with a confidence and simplicity the most flattering and winning to the proud, protecting nature of man. This consciousness diffused a serene delight in his bosom, as different from his former impassioned emotions as a lake sleeping in the silver moonlight is from the thundering cataract of Niagara. They could not be derived from the same source. He was now tasting the purest joys of friendship, and surely it was better to remain where he was, where every thing around favoured its growth, than seek those scenes, where former associations might resume their power, at the sacrifice of his present soul-felt peace.

He had written to Linda, soon after the arrival of the travellers, telling her of the invitation he had given them; and an answer came, urging him to come and bring his friends, with a warmth and sincerity which left them in no doubt of the welcome that awaited them. She told him that Roland was to leave her soon for a long voyage, that he must hasten to meet him before his departure; that she longed to show him her beautiful boy, who, although but twelve months old, already could lisp the name of Robert. The purest sentiments of conjugal and maternal love animated every line, yet they were expressed with a guarded delicacy, as if unwilling to dwell on a happiness for which *he* had once sighed—Linda, a wife, mother, sister. This beautiful, holy trinity of character he contemplated with the same feelings of reverence with which he had gazed on Raphael's exquisite picture of the holy family. He made the necessary preparations for their journey. Mr. Marshall consented that Nora should accompany them; so it was arranged that they should leave Pine Grove in a few days after the reception of the letter.

The Sunday morning before their departure, when they rose from the breakfast-table, Robert mentioned that he was going to Mount Zion, a church literally planted in the wilderness, where the scattered inhabitants of that section of the country met in the bosom of the forest shades, after the manner of the primitive Christians, to praise and worship God. The pulpit was supplied by itinerant preachers, but this Sunday Robert was to officiate in the sacred desk.

"Would his friends like to accompany him? There was a carriage road, though rather a rough one. The young ladies could go in a carriage, Henry and himself on horseback, or they could all ride on horseback. It might be interesting to those accustomed to the splendid churches of the Northern cities, to see the simple manner in which Southern planters sometimes worship Him 'whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, much less a temple made with hands.' "

They all expressed an eager desire to go. Nora was for riding on horseback, notwithstanding her recent experience; but when she found Thunderbolt was to be excluded, as too much of a heathen to attend a Sabbath party, she coincided with Julia in a preference for the carriage.

To Julia the scene had all the attraction of novelty, as well as the interest of a religious ceremony; and, above all, she was to see Robert standing as the representative of his divine Master, in the beauty of holiness, as in the glory of manhood.

The church was a simple, rustic structure, erected near a grove of oaks, in the heart of the pine woods. It looked like a small dwelling-house, for no swelling dome or rising spire indicated the purpose for which it was erected. No bell rang through the green forest-aisles, to call the worshippers together. It reminded one of a tent, pitched by the wayfaring man, as a temporary rest in the wilderness of life.

On this Sunday, arrangements had been made for the accommodation of a larger audience than could find admission in that little church. The desire to hear the young missionary, whose name was encircled by a halo of renown, gathered together a numerous and promiscuous assembly. They came from the four points of the compass: some rolling in splendid carriages, others walking in the humblest attire; the wealthy planter, and the lowly slave; the representatives of the different ranks in life, to meet in a spot where the distinctions of society present no barrier to the mighty sweeping of God's Almighty Spirit. The walls of the church could not hold that band of worshippers. Anticipating the dearth of room, labourers had been employed the previous day to convert the oaken grove into a temporary temple. A pulpit, constructed of rude boards, beneath one of the largest and grandest trees, with the magnificent heavens for a sounding board, and the waving foliage for the drapery of the altar, was the most striking feature of this rural cathedral. Seats, arranged in a semicircular manner, extended far back into the shade. Those

near the pulpit were brought from the church; the others were made of planks, laid across stakes driven into the ground; and even an old, fallen tree, in the back ground, was converted to the same use. Negro children were perched, like crows, upon the branches, exulting in their transient elevation.

Nora, who was accustomed to the arrangements at the camp-meetings of the South, saw nothing new or picturesque in the scene. She was glad, for her free spirit always chafed in a crowd, and rejoiced in the open air. But Julia gazed around her in wonder and excitement. Every thing was new and picturesque to her. In passing through New York, she had attended divine service at Trinity church, and her spirit had bowed in reverence before the majesty of its architectural grandeur; the gorgeous, yet subdued light, streaming in through the richly-stained glass, then floating up in the shadows of the continuous arches of solemn gray; the deep thunder of its massy organ, rolling in amid the loud anthem strains of human voices, oppressed her with an overpowering sense of magnificence. She was seated at a distance from the minister, whose accents seemed lost in the grand infinitude of space. Finding it in vain to follow his discourse, she had yielded herself to the influences around her, and found sermons in the "long-drawn aisles, the fretted vaults," the glowing dyes of the painted windows, and in the height, the length, the depth of the massy walls.

While riding through the woods, and thinking of Robert as the officiating minister, she located him in imagination in that magnificent church, and thought how nobly he would assimilate to its grandeur and its grace. She did not like the idea of his preaching in a rude place, to an audience, the majority of which must be unlettered, if not ignorant. Anybody that was pious, she thought, might fill such an office; but *he* was destined for a loftier sphere.

When she entered the grove, a reaction took place in her feelings. There was a novelty, a wildness and simplicity in the scene, that shamed the gaudier grandeur of art. The congreg-

gation were singing, while waiting the coming of the minister, not the pealing anthem or the *Gloria in excelsis*, whose notes are confined to the choristers, but a hymn, set to a simple, affecting air, in which every one seemed to join as with one heart and soul. There might be discords, grating to the musician's ear,—for the quavering voice of age was heard, strained to its highest pitch, and the sweet, but untutored strains of the African mingled in the chorus. But there was such a sound of deep heart-worship in it—they seemed so happy, so adoring, as they sang, that Julia felt as if it were such music the apostle meant, when he told his disciples “to sing with the spirit and the understanding also.”

“What horrible singing!” whispered Nora; “I am ashamed of it. That old man always will let out his voice like a screech-owl; he ought to be muffled.”

Julia answered only with a reproachful glance. She was quite grieved at Nora's levity. That old man, who stood up near the pulpit, and whose voice predominated over the others, had attracted her especial reverence. He looked so aged and infirm, so worn, so bent,—his few hoary, wintry locks scattered in smooth, white flakes over his sunken temples,—it was evident he was near the end of a long and weary pilgrimage. Yet all the time he was singing in a broken, trembling voice, that seemed to gather strength as he went on, an expression of ecstatic delight gleamed from his faded eyes, and played round his withered but placid lips.

“Oh! how differently people feel,” thought Julia, her eyes filling with tears at this touching picture of age and devotion; and yet a moment after, every one seemed moved by a common impulse, and turned toward the young minister, who now ascended the pulpit, and opened the sacred volume. The music ceased, and a soft, solemn hush settled on the congregation.

“How handsome he looks!” again whispered Nora; but Julia scarcely heard her this time. She had been waiting

this moment with eager expectation, and now she wished it had not arrived. She felt guilty before God, in feeling such homage for the creature in the presence-chamber of the King of kings. Casting one glance where he stood, his dark hair relieved and crowned, as it were, by the deep-green foliage, she drew her veil over her face, fearing it was but too faithful a mirror to his soul. The first words he uttered were those the announcing angels breathed to the Chaldean shepherds, while watching their flocks beneath the starry midnight—

“Glory to God on high—on earth peace—and good-will to men!”

It seemed to Julia that the sound of many waters was in her ear, in the confusion of her high-wrought feeling; but it was not long before the deep, sweet, and solemn voice of the speaker assuaged the tumult of her thoughts, and raised them to loftier tone. He read the Scriptures as she had never heard them read before. Truths, often repeated, assumed new power and majesty, and seemed clothed with a more divine authority. He opened their meaning with the silver key of eloquence, and golden treasures, hid before, glowed on the spiritual vision.

He prayed, and Julia’s spirit bowed with his before the mercy-seat. Never had she felt such deep prostration, such humility and self-abasement. The whole congregation knelt. At first there was a rustling sound, like leaves agitated by the wind, then a silence, and then the low, invoking accents, such as,—

“Listening angels lean from heaven to hear.”

It was the man addressing the Creator, the sinner pleading for pardon, the penitent supplicating for grace and acceptance. Gradually his voice rose to the full and swelling strains of adoration and praise. It was the believer rejoicing in the confidence of faith,—the Christian exulting in the hope of glory.

Julia bowed her veiled face on her clasped hands, and her tears fell fast as rain. All the wants of her being were expressed in that fervent prayer. The veil of the temple of her soul seemed rent, and glimpses of the divine nature, unseen before, gleamed upon it in rays of divine glory. Every now and then she heard the trembling, broken voice of the old man pronounce an emphatic "Amen!" and other voices more sonorous repeated the sound. And sometimes they cried out "Hallelujah!" in an irrepressible burst of devotion.

Tears falling from the eyes of prayer are the dew of the heart, preparing and softening it for the reception of heavenly truths. The subject of the sermon was Jesus of Nazareth, and him crucified. He commenced with the Babe of Bethlehem, wrapped in the swaddling-bands of humanity, lying in the manger of humiliation, lowly and unregarded as the beasts of the stall. It was a familiar theme; but he presented it to the mind as a new and wondrous picture. Certainly there is an inspiration imparted by the power of religion, which flows over the spirit like a baptism of fire, burning up the dry wood and stubble of worldly prejudices, and clearing away the mists of self-delusion. Julia had heard before the story of her Saviour's sufferings; she had dwelt upon it day after day, till it had become a part of her memory,—even the words of the evangelists in their separate narrations. But now she was eye-witness to the scenes from the dawn of his incarnation till the sun of his humanity set in blood behind the Mount of Calvary. She wandered with her Saviour by Kedron's lonely stream, wept with him in Gethsemane's midnight shades, and bowed in agony at the foot of the cross. For the first time in her life she felt willing to die, because her Saviour had died. The grave seemed a hallowed place because his sacred body had lain there, and life precious because the print of his footsteps were traced on its barren sands.

After the close of the sermon, Robert came down from the

pulpit, according to the custom of the church to which he belonged, when the Spirit of God seemed brooding over the throng, and invited those who were borne down with the burden of their sins to come and kneel before the altar, seeking Him whose yoke is easy and whose burden is light.

Julia had never listened to a similar invitation, and it appeared to be addressed peculiarly to herself. She was very near the altar, and as she looked up she met the eyes of Robert—those dark, prophet eyes, softened by human sympathy and kindred feeling. She saw others crowding forward and prostrating themselves on the ground, and she longed to press forward too; but her feet seemed glued to the earth. The congregation burst forth into a hymn of adjuration, and now she could distinguish the voice of Robert, like the swell of an organ, above the ruder strains. And this was the burden of the hymn,—

“Come, ye sinners, poor and needy,
Weak and wounded, sick and sore;
Jesus ready stands to save you,
Full of pity, love, and power.
He is able,
He is willing, doubt no more.”

Unable any longer to resist the strong, invisible chord that drew her forward, she rose, and advancing a few steps, knelt behind one who overshadowed her by her flowing drapery. As the bark, fastened to the strand, while it floats upon the water, the moment its cable is cut, is wafted into a deeper current, and rides upon the sea, her soul was borne onward, wave after wave, with a feeling of such sweet security, she could have closed her eyes in a peaceful sleep. She was conscious that some one knelt at her side, but she knew not who it was, till she heard the voice of the young minister; and though he breathed no name, she knew he was bearing her upward on the wings of prayer, and laying her gently at the Saviour's feet. In that hour of divine communion, Julia experienced an earnest of the joys of heaven. The arms of his Spirit were

around her, sustaining her weakness in their divine embrace. The murmur of many voices were in her ear, prayers and hymns mingling together, making a kind of wild melody; yet she heard only the low, thrilling accents, that seemed the utterance of her own soul. She remained thus, with her head bowed on her hands, unconscious how the moments were passing, when some one gently raised and led her from the altar. It was her brother, who had been watching her with intense solicitude, fearing the effect of such a high-wrought state of feeling. He did not wonder at her being carried away by an eloquence surpassing any he had ever heard, but he was sorry to see her giving so public a manifestation of her sensibility. All his early prejudices were opposed to enthusiasm and demonstration in religion, and he was disconcerted and annoyed that Julia, the most modest, sensitive, and retiring of human beings, should thus break through the restraints of education, and throw herself publicly into what, he believed, the vortex of excitement. A member of the Episcopal church, and accustomed, from earliest childhood, to its splendid and imposing ritual, its grand and solemn services, that succeed each other in stately uniformity like the footsteps of an armed host, it is not strange that he should deem these outbursts of feeling inconsistent with the dignity of an established form of public worship.

He hurried her to the carriage, in which Nora was already seated. A very dark cloud was hovering overhead, unobserved by the pre-occupied Julia, but which Nora had been impatiently watching. As Robert was still surrounded by an enthusiastic crowd, from which he would not, if he could, break loose, Henry gave directions to the driver to go on, while he waited for his friend.

Julia leaned back in the carriage perfectly exhausted; but though her face was colourless, her countenance shone radiantly through her veil. She had come down from the mount, but the reflection of the Invisible glory was lingering on her

brow. Nora leaned kindly over her, and folded her shawl closely over her bosom.

"You will take cold," she said; "the air is become very chill, and the rain already begins to patter against the carriage windows. Those people are crazy who stay behind in the grove. They will get drenched through and through."

"How strange," replied Julia, looking up with surprise to the darkened heavens. "I thought it was bright sunshine and blue sky. When did this cloud arise?"

"You have been in the upper regions," said Nora, smiling. "We, poor souls, who stayed below, saw the gathering vapours. Oh, Julia, I wish I could feel as you do; but I believe my heart is as hard as the nether millstone."

"No, Nora, you belie yourself. You have been weeping, and even now your eyes are filled with unshed tears. Surely there is no shame in being moved by a subject so grand, so glorious, yet so seldom brought before us."

"You mean in such a manner," said Nora. "I never heard so eloquent a sermon. I believe now Robert Graham is a Christian. I never have before. No man could speak or pray or look as he does, unless he were true and earnest. I am not ashamed to say he made me weep, and *almost* persuaded me to prostrate myself, as you did, in the dust of humiliation. But ever since I could go alone, I have heard myself called such a wicked, vile sinner, and threatened with being sent to such an awful place, that, as I told you, I have become hardened. I know I am not good, but I cannot believe that I am such a horrible wretch as they make me out to be."

"I am sure Mr. Graham used no such dreadful denunciations," said Julia. "He used the language of persuasiveness and love."

"Yes," replied Nora; "if I ever become a Christian, it will be through the influence of such sermons. Oh!" she added seriously, "there must be something divine in religion, to change so entirely the character of Robert Graham. Think of

the lion transformed into the lamb, the hawk to the dove, the northern tempest to the summer zephyr, and you can hardly imagine a more miraculous change. Yes, think of Nora Marshall turned into Julia Bellenden, and it would be a more wondrous contrast."

"I do not know if my present feelings will last," said Julia, endeavouring to realize the change described by Nora, but in vain. One pure and brilliant image presented itself to the exclusion of every other. "But if they do pass away, I shall never, never forget them, and they will return to me again in my dying hour. I have always thought, Nora, that I should die young. It requires no soothsayer but these prophetic beatings," cried she, laying her hand on her too-quickly palpitating heart, "to tell me this, and I have shrunk from the thought of death as naturally as our pale spring-flowers from the stormy winds of March. The darkness and loneliness of the grave appalled me. Eternity crushed me with its grandeur and mystery. But to-day, I have realized what I can never describe. I have tasted a peace that passeth understanding, a joy that cannot fade utterly away. I feel as if I could pass unfearing the cold waves of Jordan, with smiles on my lips and glory in my soul."

She lifted her blue eyes toward heaven with a celestial expression, and Nora felt as if her words were true, that she was not destined to remain long on earth.

"Do not talk so," she exclaimed, putting her arms caressingly round her; "you will break my heart; I could not live without you. And don't you see, I am growing better every day by being with you? I am getting so tame, that I am actually insipid; and Robert, you have come to him like the arctic dove, and he is putting out his hand to draw you into the ark. There, you good, precious little soul, keep the shawl close round your throat, and lay your head on my warm heart. The rain nor cold cannot reach you here."

But in spite of Nora's affectionate cares, Julia did take cold,

and suffered from its consequences for many days afterward. She reclined most of the time on the sofa, and every evening the alabaster whiteness of her cheeks was tinged with the brightest and most beautiful rose-tint, warming her delicacy and pallor into angelic beauty. Nora always arranged her crimson shawl round her in a graceful drapery, so as to make a *picture of her*, as she said, and Julia smilingly and passively submitted herself to her hands. Nora would take the comb from her hair, suffering all its golden affluence to flow at its own sweet will, or restraining it by some wildwood garland she had wreathed for the occasion. She did not seem conscious how graceful she looked, herself kneeling on a low stool by the couch, exhibiting at the same time the exuberance of her fancy and the lavishness of her affections.

The journey was deferred till the following week, in consequence of Julia's indisposition. The weather, which had been cold and rainy, softened and cleared, and a young moon shining on the gloomy verge of the western horizon, showed how long the travellers had lingered at Pine Grove.

One evening Henry induced Nora to ramble abroad with him. He knew what a sacrifice it was for her to confine herself within doors as she had done with Julia, and *perhaps* he thought of his own gratification. Nora looked back with a smile as she closed the door; but Robert was seated by Julia, and they neither seemed aware of their departure, till the tapping of Nora's fingers on the outside of the window and the ringing of her merry laughter made them conscious of the fact.

Julia, on finding herself thus unexpectedly left alone with Robert, raised herself from her reclining attitude, and gathering her wreath-twined locks in her hand, looked round for the comb which Nora had stolen, but she looked in vain.

"Nora is so affectionate and so wild," said she, quite vexed at having allowed herself to be made such a plaything, such a fantastic picture, "I know not how to resist her. She makes

me look very foolish, but I do not mind it when she is by, since it pleases and amuses her."

"And why should you mind it now, even admitting the fact, which I do not?" said Robert, taking the hand which held her gathered tresses, and thus forcing her with exceeding gentleness to liberate them. "I insist upon your reclining exactly as you did before, making no more exertion and feeling as little restraint as if Nora were sitting by you instead of myself; and if you are willing to look foolish, that is, just as you now do, because it pleases her, I assure you *it* pleases me a great deal more, though I may not have the grace to manifest it."

Smiling with pleasure at the first personal compliment Robert had ever paid her, and yielding, as if under the influence of magnetism, she reclined her head once more on the arm of the sofa, while Robert still retained the hand he had taken,—that frail, delicate, fairy hand, which Nora said was only fit to gather rose-petals and to feed humming-birds. But Robert thought, while he almost unconsciously held it in his, that, fair and fragile as it was, it was formed to clothe the naked, feed the hungry, and wipe the dew of agony from the brow of the dying. It was the hand of an angel, and fashioned for an angel's office.

"Julia," said he, "we were brought very near each other, when kneeling side by side at that rustic altar. Life seldom furnishes moments so dear and precious as those. I cannot describe the joy, the ecstasy, with which I beheld you bowing in meekness and humility before the Saviour, whose claims upon your love I had endeavoured, however faintly, to set forth. I felt that there was henceforth a bond between us, which time would only strengthen, a bond holy as heaven, and lasting as eternity. Do you acknowledge this, Julia, or have I mistaken pure, but transient emotion, for the consecration of your heart and soul to the service of the God who made, the Saviour who redeemed you?"

"I meant every thing," said Julia, awed and melted by the tender solemnity of his manner ; "but, alas ! I fear I can accomplish nothing. I am weak and wayward, but I have a steadfast purpose. Your words have kindled in my soul a holy flame, which, though it may be at times dim and wavering, will burn, I trust, as long as my frail being lasts. But I need your strengthening influence, your guiding hand. If I be not too exacting, I would ask you still to give me your counsels and your prayers."

She looked up to him with such humility, reverence, and trust, that Robert felt guilty of deception in inspiring such unqualified confidence, such simple, undoubting faith, in his goodness and piety. Would she thus confide in and regard him if she knew the history of the past ? In spite of the incommunicativeness, the reticence of his nature, he felt a yearning to pour out his whole soul into her confidence, to tell her all that he had been, that she might not too highly appreciate what he was ; to talk to her of Linda, to purchase, though it might be by humiliating confessions, her sympathy for him as a man, and thus diminish her too-exalted homage for him as a Christian. He knew that she had never loved ; her rare simplicity and childish artlessness of manner were incompatible with an experience which casts the shade of consciousness over the most transparent character. Would she prize his friendship so highly, if she knew it was born of the ruins of rejected love, risen from the ashes of a life-consuming passion ? No ! unworthy as he was to be an idol for purity to worship, he would voluntarily descend from the pedestal, though he crushed by the act the garlands which entwined it.

So he told her the history of his youth, of his wild passion, its fearful consequences, his repentance, despair, and reformation. He laid bare his whole heart before her as he had never done to a human being ; he unrolled the dark scroll of memory, expecting to see her recoil from the exhibition ; but, like the recording angel, she wept, and would fain blot out the charac-

ters forever. It is not to be supposed that Robert remained calmly seated during this exciting narrative, or that Julia reclined passively on the arm of the sofa, a motionless listener. Sometimes he walked the room, with his former rapid and resounding tread; sometimes he paused, and leaned against the mantelpiece, while the lamps burning above bronzed with their golden rays the black waves of his hair; then again he would cast himself on the low seat that Nora had vacated, and bending his head on the arm of the sofa, express, by the lowness of his attitude, the deep humiliation of his spirit.

He was sincere in his desire to lower himself in Julia's estimation, to reduce the brilliant tints in which her imagination clothed him; but the more he humbled himself, the more she exalted him. He was far more interesting, thus involved in the alternate sunbeams and shadows of sensibility, than when, in serene and holy majesty, he had seemed lifted above all human passion. She felt the exquisite delight of sympathy, the charm of an equal communion.

She would have given worlds to be able to express all which she felt, but she was voiceless from the intensity of her emotions. Deeply as she was moved by this unlooked-for mark of confidence on his part, every feeling of delicacy and candour prompted her to tell him of her previous knowledge of his history. She would have arrested him at the commencement, but his words flowed with such impassioned eloquence, she had no power to stay their fervid tide. Now he sat silent, his lofty head bowed down, and she gathered courage to make the confession.

"I thank you for the confidence you have reposed in me," she said; "I appreciate its value, but I ought to have told you that I knew before all you have now revealed. No, not all; facts have been related by others, but you alone could make the revelation to which I have listened with a sympathy too deep for words. I ought, perhaps, to have checked you, but then you might have thought I did not care to hear you. Have

I been wrong?" she asked, with the soft, appealing look of one begging for forgiveness.

"And have you known all this, Julia?" said he, fixing on her eyes from whose dark depths the shadows of memory were slowly retreating, "and yet deem me worthy to be your counsellor on earth, your guide to heaven? I thought your esteem was based on ignorance of the past, and it humbled me in my own eyes. I did not know my life belonged to history. Yet I cannot wonder such deeds of passion should be recorded, and blazoned too."

"I endeavoured to check the tongue of the narrator," replied Julia, blushing at the thought that he should deem her mean enough to take advantage of a servant's garrulity, or of a friend's communicativeness, "but it was in vain. I always considered family histories as too sacred for a stranger's ear."

"Do not misunderstand me," cried he. "I know how intrusive this gossip must have seemed, and I regret that it should have been forced upon you. But though you have been doomed to the misery of listening to a twice-told tale, I cannot but rejoice in the privilege you have given me, since the springs and motives of action must be best known to the actor. I did not want you to think better of me than I deserve, but I do not wish you to believe me worse than I really am."

"I think I am disposed to do you justice," she said, with an ingenuous smile. "I will try, however, to gratify you, by thinking very ill of you—if I can."

Robert must have been very cold and deadened in heart, not to be charmed by this bewitching artlessness. His countenance lighted up, like a cloud, when the sun suddenly breaks forth.

"Will you, then," said he, extending his hand, "receive one so erring, yet so sincere, as your true friend,—as the adopted brother of your heart and soul?"

Julia, who had hung with trembling embarrassment on his

closing words, held out her hand, with a quick-drawn breath; and Robert received it as the seal of a pure and lasting compact. Did not the rapid pulsations of that hand, as he clasped it,—spotless, fragile, and yielding as infancy's, in his own,—warn him that it was more than the seal of friendship, more than the pledge of sisterly regard? Whether the warning was understood and heeded, or not, the moment of unreserved communion was over. A light tap at the window announced the return of the ramblers, and Nora bounded into the room, sparkling as the stars, blooming as roses, her spirits pitched to the highest key. She came like the cold, exhilarating air of the polar regions, flowing in under the soft balminess of a tropical atmosphere. She came, like the bright, clear, starry out-door world into the moonlight stillness of a sequestered bower. What a change the sudden entrance of this gay, brisk, exuberant being caused! Julia started, as if awakened from a delicious dream. Robert rose, and walking to the window, looked out into the clear, blue night.

Henry, who seemed as animated as Nora, though less demonstrative, went up to Julia, and, passing his cool hands over her warm cheeks, declared that Robert must be a good physician, for he had never seen her look so well.

“Have you enjoyed your walk?” she asked.

“Oh, yes,” he answered, “it was charming. Nora discovered a path in the woods; so devious and romantic, it was a perfect sylvan labyrinth. We became such enchanting company to each other that we actually lost ourselves, and expected to ramble away our lives, and perish like the ‘Babes in the Woods,’ for my Ariadne had no silken clue, to guide her wandering Theseus through the maze.”

“Do not believe him,” cried Nora; “it is all a fabrication of his own. We have not been lost. He declared he would follow me to the end of the world, and I made a zigzag path round the trees, which I defied him to trace. I would have kept him wandering after me yet, bound by his oath, had I

not been afraid that you would be frightened, Julia, at our long absence."

"Oh, no," answered Julia; "I was not in the least frightened. I did not think of your returning in so short a time."

Even Henry could not help laughing at Julia's artless remark.

"That is the way," he said, "with us vain people. We imagine ourselves of so much consequence to others, that our prolonged absence will throw them into paroxysms of agony, and we find them as calm and unruffled as the Pacific Ocean. I shall not hurry you home again, Nora, with such ungallant speed."

"Hurry me!" exclaimed Nora; "you might as well try to hurry the hurricane!"

But we will not attempt to repeat all the airy nothings—the bubbles of nonsense—that issued, sparkling and evaporating, from her tongue. Her gayety was contagious. Robert's unburdened heart caught the reflection of Henry's sunny spirit, and the latter recognised the brilliant genius that presided over their convivial festivals of college days. Nothing made Henry so happy as this. He admired and revered Robert in his present character; but he loved to see him abandon himself to the memories of those hours of reckless joy and classic brightness,—those hours so dear to his own remembrance. He forgot to warn Julia that it was time to retire; he forgot that time had wings.

It was one of the last evenings they expected to pass at Pine Grove, and they all lingered round the hearth-stone, as if unwilling to separate. Though the late autumnal days of a Southern clime are of Grecian softness, the fire of the domestic altar is always kindled at night, warming the heart by its ruddy glow.

When Julia laid her cheek upon her pillow, her last thoughts were not of the home she had left behind—not of the gentle mother,—the indulgent father,—the sweet, loving

sister, whose daily solicitude and nightly prayers followed the wanderer's path. She tried to bring before her mind the withered trees and faded fields of the North, now baring themselves for their wintry drapery of snow; her fancy would dwell in forests of evergreen and bowers of jessamine, and a voice, even sweeter than a mother's tongue, seemed wooing her to tarry in them forever.

Ah, Julia! She was going beyond the compact. Friendship—brotherly and sisterly regard!—nothing more was asked or promised, yet, without meaning to encroach, she was dreaming of a great deal more.

Nora had her dreams, too; but she did not tell what they were. Who knows, but, borne on the peaceful waves of slumber, she was winging her way to New England's granite shore, building a heart-nest on some of its rugged rocks and branching elms, or constructing a love-palace from its wintry ice?

CHAPTER VI.

THE scene is changed to the home of Linda, in Louisiana's sunny clime.

When, three years ago, the writer and the reader bade adieu to that home, it was said that "Linda was happy." Happiness is the peculiar privilege of young and beautiful brides. It is not strange that it was hers. It is, perhaps, more strange,—since the vicissitudes of the day and night of human life are almost as constant as the succession of the morning sunbeams and evening shadows,—that, during those three passing years, she has been growing happier and lovelier. Nothing has occurred to mar the perfection of her felicity. The fickle waves have proved constant to Roland, and borne him in safety over their heaving bosom. While others have sighed

over the burning boat and the wrecking bark, he has gone on his watery way safe and triumphant, loving more and more the element to which he had consecrated his early vows and his later energies. A beautiful child—that connecting link between earth and heaven—has crowned their union with Nature's holiest blessing. Surely nothing is wanting to complete this picture of wedded and parental joy, of domestic harmony and smiling fortune! The clouds of the past only serve to bring out, in brighter, stronger relief, the images of present felicity.

Linda's grateful heart is conscious of but one want—the presence of Robert; of Robert, so dreaded as the lover, so beloved as the brother and the friend. Her prayers have followed him on his heavenly mission; her thanksgivings ascended for his safe return.

She was charmed at the prospect of his coming, accompanied by his Northern friends; and, with the prescience of a woman's heart, she began to weave a romance of the few threads of fact contained in the letter which announced their contemplated visit. It is astonishing what a beautiful web she fabricated of material so slender, and how brightly she coloured it with the charming tints of her own imagination.

"Oh, yes!" she said, perusing the letter a second time, and musing on its contents; "Heaven has placed this sweet Northern traveller right in his path, that the flowers of love may blossom in it anew, and the closed portals of his heart open to admit their fragrance. 'A young, fair, and delicate girl,'" continued she, reading from the letter—"the sister of my college friend.' 'He has brought her from the chill regions of the North to our beautiful Southern clime, fearing for her the premature doom that has fallen on his own young wife.' 'I have promised her that she shall find a friend and sister in Linda.' Yes, Robert, your promise shall be redeemed. For your sake, I will welcome this sweet, drooping, Northern flower, and she shall bloom beautifully in the garden of my

heart. She is frail and delicate, and needs protection and support,—and who so fitted to bestow them as thou, Robert, in thy manly dignity and soul-sustaining principles? She flees from the cold blasts that bring the snow-flakes and sleet upon their wintry wings. Thy home, Robert, is sunned by almost perennial summer; and thou canst make a downy nest for her in thine own loving bosom. The sister of thy college friend—how strong the fascination of such a tie! That alone is irresistible. And I, who never had a sister—how I shall love, for my own sake, this dear young invalid, so far from her home and friends! I will surround her with the tenderest cares, the fondest attentions,—cheating her into the belief that she is my own twin-born soul."

Who does not recognise the sweet castle-builder, who, when a little child, while awaiting the approach of the step-mother whom she had never yet seen, erected an aerial palace of love, which fell before the first cold breath of reality!

There was another clause in the letter which pleased, without exciting her. Robert, anticipating the wishes of Julia, had suggested the probability of Nora Marshall being her companion in the journey, as she was now under his roof. "You remember her," said the letter, "as the wild little hoyden with whom I waged perpetual warfare,—myself a rude, ungovernable boy. She is very wild still; but we have buried the tomahawk of animosity,—and, though the elements of our characters are as incapable of blending as water and oil, our meeting is now as peaceful and harmless. That she has genuine tenderness of heart, her spontaneous affection for the fragile Julia shows."

"Ah! how fair, how interesting this fragile Julia must be, since even the wild Nora acknowledged so speedily her gentle influence!"

Roland smiled in his own peculiar, not quite believing way, at Linda's ardent expressions. He sometimes indulged the natural sportiveness of his disposition, by affecting an incre-

dulity he did not feel, so as to call forth a more vivid delineation of her fancy sketches.

"Very likely this fair young invalid may prove a rustic Yankee lass, whom Robert calls fair and delicate, out of courtesy to her sex."

"Some of the most beautiful and charming women I have ever seen are Yankees, as you call them," replied Linda, warmly; "and her brother would not have been educated at a Southern college were he not of polished birth."

"And why, my fair logician?"

"Because the yeomanry of the North, the labourers and tillers of the earth, are prejudiced against the South, whose sons of toil are of a darker, lowlier race. The mere circumstance of young Bellenden being a graduate of Charlottesville shows his family are exempt from such prejudice, and therefore of a higher caste."

"Admirable syllogism! but surely *you* do not, would not deprecate the dignity of labour, the right divine of industry,—a right exercised at first in the garden of Eden, and which man should claim as his noblest heritage!"

"You know I would not, Roland. That mocking smile shows you know exactly what I do mean, and that you believe with me that the gentle Julia may be all that my imagination has painted her and my heart prophesies."

"I do, indeed, rejoice in the thought of your having so charming a companion, to fill the void my absence will create," said Roland, his sportive accents changing to tones of seriousness. "As I am bound for foreign lands, and my stay may be somewhat protracted, I feel unusual anxiety on your account."

"Had it not been for the coming of these friends, Roland, I would have pleaded so earnestly as to overcome all your powers of resistance. I would have been your companion; and, of course, our darling Walton."

"Were I not bound on a voyage of business, imperative

business, which involves a devious course and complicated cares, I would indeed take my wife and child in my arms, and, happy in my floating home, care not how long I lingered. But as it is, I must not divide my thoughts even with the holiest of all earthly duties. When I think of the commanding claims Mr. Hunly has on my gratitude and respect, I blush that I should deem any thing a sacrifice which will prove my devotion to his interests. He has been so largely engaged in commerce, that the difficulties in which he is plunged present a tangled web few would have the boldness to attempt to unravel. I have the boldness to attempt, I trust I shall have the ability to execute."

Mr. Hunly, it will be recollected, was the gentleman whom Roland Lee rescued from the wreck of the *Belle Creole*, and who testified his gratitude in so signal a manner. His health had never recovered from the shock it had received, so that the cares and responsibilities born of his large possessions weighed heavily upon him. He always called Roland his son, and Roland felt that every duty belonging to affiliation rested as naturally on him as if he owned that sacred name.

Mr. Hunly, as Roland said, was extensively engaged in commerce. His ships bore the snowy wealth of his plantations to other lands, and connected him with some of the largest commercial houses of Liverpool and Havre. The failure of one of those large houses, like the falling of one massive pillar of the many that support a great temple, caused every associated interest to tremble and shake with insecurity. All the accumulated wealth which for many years had been flowing into Mr. Hunly's coffers, and which he had been sending in streams of munificence and charity over the land, was endangered by the concussion. To save it, if possible, from the general ruin, was the object of the mission which was about to bear Roland Lee to a foreign country. Linda was too self-sacrificing not to yield an unmurmuring assent to Roland's proposition; but the heart of the wife was made doubly tender by the affection of

the mother, and she looked forward to his departure with feelings she had never experienced before. But the wife of him whose profession bears him to the battle-field, or over the rolling wave, must be brave and heroic ; and Linda often smiled, while the tear of anxiety trembled in her eye.

It was under such circumstances that she welcomed Robert, his Northern friends, and her early schoolmate to Rosavilla, the name of her Louisiana home. The first day, on which they could reasonably be expected, Roland had sent a carriage to the landing-place, near as it was, on account of Julia's delicate health, where it waited hour after hour for their arrival ; and so it was day after day, and still they came not. Some accident must have occurred ; but just as this conviction was admitted by all as the cause of their delay, they came, and Robert and Linda met, after a separation of three years. It was late ; the hour of expectation had passed by, and Linda called in her wandering thoughts to her own household treasures.

Though the season was so far advanced, the tropic warmth of the climate suffered the night air to enter through the open windows, shaded even now with blossoming vines and perennial roses. A gentle flame illumined the hearth, but it seemed more for irradiation than warmth, and harmonized with the soft lustre of the moonlight lamps on the mantelpiece and table. A pure, youthful, yet highly cultivated taste, hovered with airy grace over the furniture and decorations of this apartment. Even in the dreary home of her stepmother, dreary from association rather than its actual aspect, Linda had left traces of her girlish love of the beautiful and appropriate. In her own, where she reigned with unconscious regality,—for her wishes were laws, obeyed as soon as known, because made known with so much gentleness, and such a willingness to yield,—in her own home, with abundant materials to work out her bright fancies and graceful tastes, she had displayed the exquisiteness of the first, and the luxuriance of the last. The drapery which shaded the windows was almost as transparent and light as the

web of the gossamer, and through these gauzy folds, gathered back into the clasp of a hand glittering with a golden semblance, the roses breathed clouds of fragrance, and their blossoms glowed with softened beauty.

This apartment communicated with another by folding doors, now open, furnished in a similar manner, only the light drapery of the curtains was lined with rose-coloured silk, Linda's favourite colour, and a bed covered with sweeping folds of white lace, falling below a rose-coloured canopy, showed it was that penetralia of the household sacred from the stranger's foot. A crib, made of the light bamboo, and covered with the same white lace drapery, as a protection against mosquitoes, the worse than Egyptian plague of the far South, showed also that this chamber was the resting-place of infant innocence. Paintings, over whose rich, glittering frames a white cloud of gauze was floating, relieved the cool whiteness of the walls, and marble statuettes stood on fluted, ingrained pedestals in the corners of the room. One of these represented a young flower-girl, from whose marble basket sweet flowers were dripping, diffusing the hues and fragrance of life over her cold, white lineaments.

Linda sat at a table near one of the open windows, by the side of Roland, who held a book in his hand, but at this moment he seemed to be perusing a fairer page in the face of Linda. What lighted up the radiant smile that now illumined her whole countenance? Why did she stretch out her beautiful arms so eagerly toward the half-open door, and then partly turn toward Roland, with such a world of meaning in her smiling glance, as if directing his attention to the same object? A sound sweet as those "airy tongues that syllable men's names," musical and indistinct as the murmur of the silver cascade, greeted her ear. It was the cherub voice of infancy, it was her own darling Walton, who now sprang from the arms of his African nurse to the embrace of his beautiful young mother. The child was in his loose night-dress, fresh from his evening ablution, with the pure rose-tint cold water always

gives to the lilies of infancy visible not only on his soft, round cheeks, but his little, fat, dimpled fingers, and waxen feet; Linda caught him in her arms, pressed him rapturously to her bosom, and pushing back the soft, short, silken curls from his baby brow, kissed it again and again. She kissed its cheeks, lips, and neck, while rills of laughter bubbled from its rosy lips; then holding him from her as far as possible, she called upon Roland to admire its infantine loveliness and grace. He did admire it, even so as to satisfy her fond, exacting, maternal pride, but he admired the lovely, graceful mother more, and folding his arms around them both, his heart swelled with love and gratitude too deep for utterance.

It was at this moment that Robert, who, at their own request, had left his friends in the carriage at the gate, while he went forward to announce them, approached the door, and through the open windows, so transparently curtained, he beheld this charming family group. He could not help pausing to gaze upon it, had death been the penalty of the act. He stood in the shadow of the rose-trees, and the balmy atmosphere floating round seemed the heart-incense rising from that domestic altar. For three years, the image of Linda had lingered in his memory, as he had seen her in bridal robes, her eyes suffused with parting tears, which veiled her maiden love and happiness. She was changed only as the stars change, from lustre to lustre. She was changed only as the flowers change, from bloom to bloom, with ever-increasing beauty. Her girlish charms were now but just developed, for Linda had only reached her twentieth year, and was in the morning glow of womanhood. Her dress of simple white corresponded equally with the mildness of the climate and the youthful character of her face and form. Her beautiful brown hair was arranged with a kind of childish grace peculiarly her own, waving back from her temples, falling again in careless ringlets, and wreathed behind in braids that here and there burst out into curls, in the unrestrained wantonness of luxuriance.

Had she studied for years to find an attitude of grace to please the eye of a fastidious artist, she could not have assumed one more enchanting than the one in which she now rested,—with her arms slightly raised, holding the child, and her head reclining on her husband's shoulder.

Robert saw in him only the background of this radiant picture,—the framework of its beauty, and its guardian too. For one moment his heart throbbed wildly with all the fervour of its early passion; he forgot the insurmountable barrier that separated them; the marriage bond, the maternal tie, the thousand sanctities of domestic life; he remembered her only as the being given to his boyhood by a mother's regal will, the first and only beloved of his passionate youth; and he was about to rush forward, and rending her from the arms which already encircled her, claim her as his own in the sight of God and man. But the child, to whose cherub face her own was lifted, interposed itself as a heavenly shield between her and his momentary madness,—weak and helpless as it was, it had the strength of an armed legion in its little waxen arm. Like the delicate steel web that surrounds the flame of a safety-lamp, imprisoning with its slender fibres the fire-sparks whose escape would be death, the holy charm of infant innocence wove a spell too pure, too strong for one ray of passion to penetrate. Robert started, and drew a relieving breath. The beloved of his youth melted away into the wife and mother, guarded, as with bars of triple gold, from every thought inconsistent with a brother's love.

The window opened to the floor. Lifting the drooping vine-wreaths, and putting aside the soft cloud of lace through which he had been gazing, he stood in front of the green archway, and his tall figure intercepted by its darkness the starlight gleaming through. Linda started up with a cry of joy, and almost tossing the baby into its father's arms, threw her own impulsively, joyously, round Robert's neck. She greeted him as a long-absent brother, with the glad freedom of unre-

strained affection, chastened by the remembrance of their mutual sufferings.

"Oh! Robert, dear Robert," she cried, looking up in his face with glistening eyes, "is it indeed you? and are you come at last to be the crowning blessing of our happy home?"

Robert's heart was too full for words. He could only clasp her in silence to his bosom, while he breathed a voiceless prayer to heaven, that he might indeed prove a blessing, by being worthy of such confiding tenderness. When Roland extended his hand with brotherly warmth and cordiality, as the friend of all others most gladly welcomed, he could meet the clear sunshine of his glance with one as clear and steadfast, and rejoice in the consciousness of recovered strength. Then Linda, with all a young mother's pride, put her baby in his arms, and made him lisp with sweet indistinctness the name she had taught his infant lips to utter,—while, gay, fearless, and loving, it laid its soft cheek on his bosom, and passed its white chubby hand over his raven hair.

He looked at Linda when he restored the baby to her arms, and had she read all that glance expressed, its interpretation would have been this:—

"Should the time ever come, Linda, when thou and thy child require a guardian and protector, I will shield ye both, if need be, at the sacrifice of life. Thou needest me not in the blaze of sunshine which now surrounds thee; but in the night-time of sorrow, the storm and the tempest, I may yet be thy stay and support."

"But where are your friends?" asked Linda, as soon as she had time to think of any one but Robert; "why are you alone, when I have been making room in my heart for three more?"

"My friends wait in the carriage at the gate," answered Robert, ashamed of his forgetfulness of them while lingering at the window.

"Here is one to answer for herself," exclaimed a gay voice gushing through the roses,—and Nora, tossing the vine-wreaths

aside with sportive grace, entered the room,—“Mrs. Lee, Mrs. Roland Lee,—no, no,—Linda, my own Linda Walton, don’t you remember your old torment, the young scapegoat of the school, Nôra Marshall?”

A cordial, smiling, school-girlish embrace was the answer to this characteristic appeal. She did find it somewhat difficult to recognise “the old torment and young scapegoat” in the handsome, spirited young girl before her. There was, however, a lurking mischief in her eye that reminded her of old times.

“Where is Miss Bellenden? Where is her brother?” again cried Linda. “Robert, take me to them immediately. She will think Southern hospitality exists but in name. How could I forget her so long?”

“She is still in the carriage,” answered Nora. “I could not persuade her to do as I did; jump over ceremony, and introduce myself. Her brother is with her. Captain Lee,” said she, turning to Roland, as Robert and Linda left the room together, “the man lives not whom I have been so anxious to see as yourself.”

“Indeed,” said Roland, pleased and amused with the dashing frankness of her manner, “to what source am I indebted for this flattering interest?”

“To the romance existing in every woman’s breast. I knew you by reputation as a hero, and as the successful rival of Robert Graham. Was not that sufficient to excite my curiosity?”

“I regret that excited curiosity should find so little to gratify it. I am sure you must think me wanting in the usual characteristics of a hero.”

“What are they?”

“A magnificent figure, sable hair, and stormy temperament, are they not?”

“You describe Robert Graham. But he is a minister, and therefore cannot be a hero. What a pity such brilliant quali-

fications should be so misapplied! I like *your* profession. I love the water; I think I was born to be a sailor's wife. Do you call yourself a sailor, Captain Lee?"

Nora rattled away as lightly as if she had known Roland all her life, perfectly at ease, as bright and sparkling as if fresh from morning slumbers, instead of being wearied by a long journey. She took off her bonnet, smoothed her rich, glossy hair, arranged her collar, and shook the wrinkling folds of her dress, talking and laughing the whole time; and when Linda returned, ran to her and told her that she and her husband were already the best friends in the world.

How different from the pale, weary, and sensitive Julia! Overcome by fatigue, oppressed by strange and varying feelings, she sank upon a seat, shrouding her face with her veil, as she did the night she arrived at Pine Grove. It was remarkable, considering Julia's youth and beauty, that she should shrink with such morbid sensibility from the strangers' gaze. The difference in the character of the two young girls might be read in this simple trait. Nora never would wear a veil. She despised them, and declared she could not breathe freely with one over her face. Julia, in walking, riding, in steamboat or car, invariably drew down her veil on the approach of a stranger; while Nora would turn on them her keen, bright glance, resolved to see how they looked, without thinking or caring whether they looked at her or not.

Julia was now in the presence of that Linda of whom she had heard and thought and dreamed so much, and the conviction forced itself into her mind, firm and cold as an iron wedge, that he who had loved *her* could not transfer his affections to another. All the sweet day-dreams which had been floating round her during their protracted journey, wrapping her in a delicious haziness, making an Indian summer of her heart, vanished in the light of Linda's greeting smile. The soft, glad music of her voice, coming to her through the glimmering starlight, thrilled her with a sense of exquisite beauty,

and now, when she saw her hovering round her, lavishing upon her every kind and soothing attention, while the mimic moonlight within fell resplendently on her, she felt herself a dim shadow, vanishing before her noonday brightness.

Linda, unconscious of what was passing in Julia's mind, sought by every gentle and endearing care to beguile her weariness. She sat down by her, relieved her, with her own hands, of her bonnet, mantilla, and shawl, and entreated her to feel as much at home as if she were seated at a sister's side.

"I never had a sister," said she, pressing Julia's hand in both her own, "and ever since I have heard of your coming, I have adopted you as one, and loved you in anticipation. Perhaps you think me hasty to express what I have not had time to feel; but you must remember that I am of Southern birth, and our feelings are quick as the rays of our warmer sun, not the silent growth of years."

"I feel far more than I can express," answered Julia, blushing at the consciousness of how much more she did feel than she was willing to express, "and if I seem cold, impute it to a languid frame, rather than a frigid heart."

"Yes, I know you are an invalid, but I shall not suffer you to remain one. Winter cannot reach you in our orange bowers. Look at those roses; just such shall bloom upon your cheeks before you leave us."

"Every thing seems like enchantment," said Julia, looking round her, finding it impossible to realize that she stood on the threshold of a wintry season: "when I think of our scentless shrubs and withered gardens, I imagine myself transported to a fairer world."

Julia, seated familiarly at Linda's side, conversing with her on ordinary topics as with a common mortal, felt as if a cold, bright frostwork were melting away in the sunshiny atmosphere she diffused around her. The cold, dim, shadowy consciousness passed away, in the soft, luxurious air she was

inhaling; she dared to raise her eyes and seek the animated countenance of her brother, though she knew Robert was by him, and might meet her glance.

Never had Henry Bellenden found himself in a more congenial scene. Every thing around him corresponded with the elegance of his taste, and gratified his love of the beautiful and poetic. As Julia had said, "every thing seemed like enchantment," from the fair young hostess to the minutest object which betrayed the touch of her fairy hand. The noble simplicity and frankness of Roland charmed him. He felt an irresistible desire to be constantly shaking hands with him, thus establishing an electrical communication, swifter and warmer than words. He forgave Linda her preference, especially as it left Robert free—free to yield, as he had no doubt he had already done, to Julia's gentle influence. It seemed impossible to him that one, whose affections were disengaged, could know Julia without loving her; and the idea of the married Linda, as an obstacle to his sister's happiness, never occurred to his mind. Dearly as he had loved the wife of his youth, from the turf that covered her grave, sweet flowers of hope and love might spring, even sweeter for the tears with which he had moistened its verdure. It seemed to him that every one must feel as he did, turning their back to the shadows and their face to the light, gathering the flower and trampling on the weed, cultivating new affections instead of brooding with unavailing sadness over blighted joys. Feeling as he did, could he look at Robert and imagine he was moulded, heart and soul, like himself? With that brow of intense thought, that eye whose burning rays even the serenity and mildness of religion could not always temper, and that lip which even in silence spoke of deep, repressed sensibility? Did he believe the passions enshrined in such a form, were not stronger, more unconquerable than his own? Had he placed his hand on his own brow and felt its serene expansion, on his temples where the fair hair so lightly, carelessly waved, looked into his own

eyes, so clear in their blue depths of thought, he would not, it seems, have imagined that Robert could feel and think as he did.

Nora, who found it impossible to remain still, flitted about, looking at the pictures, at the statues, plucking the roses and wreathing them in her hair, and at last vanished from the room. Linda could not help wondering where she had gone, taking so unceremoniously the freedom of the house, when she reappeared with little Walton enthroned upon her shoulder, highly delighted with his elevated position. She had watched the nurse when she carried him from the room, thinking it was time for sober babies to be put to sleep, and running after her, snatched the infant from her arms before she knew what had become of him, and carried him back in triumph.

"Is he not the sweetest creature in the universe?" she cried, looking for some one to assent to her assertion, though interrogatively expressed. The eyes of the parents and the tongue of Henry immediately answered in the affirmative.

"Does he ever cry, Linda?" she asked, tossing him up with a wild glee that made Linda tremble for the result. "If he does, I shall throw him down in a moment. A crying baby in my arms frightens me more than a roaring lion. I never could pacify one in my life."

"I should not think you could," said Linda, laughing, "and I insist upon your giving him to his nurse, before he exhibits his terrific powers. He is usually asleep before this time, and I cannot be responsible for his good behaviour."

Linda, like every young mother, was anxious for the reputation of her first-born, and perceiving the dawn of terror in the soft amazement of his eyes, she feared the usual expression of infantine trepidation. The infant, on whose drowsy lids the down of slumber was beginning to fall when Nora whirled him from his resting-place, though at first excited to merriment, grew restless, and evidently sought the means of escape. Unaccustomed to such energetic nursing, its arms

fluttered toward its mother like the wings of a new-fledged bird, and putting up its beautiful lips, it burst into a real heart-cry.

Quick as lightning, Nora turned and dropped the infant in Robert's arms, mischievously thinking that nothing would embarrass him more, and that there would be something laughable in their mutual consternation. Linda, who had suddenly risen and approached them, stopped and smiled. Robert, instead of recoiling and looking round for escape from an unwelcome burden, pressed the little creature gently to his bosom, and hushed its passionate alarm. Quiet as a lamb it lay, looking up in his face, as if it would read into his inmost soul with its earnest, unreceding glance; then closing its eyes with a sweet smile, it leaned its head lower and lower on his breast and sunk into a gentle slumber.

Nothing could have touched Linda more than to see the once fiery Robert thus tenderly cradling her infant in his arms with all a woman's gentleness. It was, indeed, a beautiful picture, and no one admired it more than Nora, who had expected so different a scene. She seemed quite subdued. The effervescence of her spirit subsided, leaving sufficient elasticity for her own enjoyment and the comfort of those around her.

There are times when excessive gayety is more oppressive than deep despondency. Its shrill *alto* cannot harmonize with the minor key of sensibility. There was a *brusquerie* about Nora, an unexpectedness in all she said and did, that kept one in a state of insecurity in her presence. She was like one of those substances which have such an affinity for oxygen that they cannot without danger be exposed to atmospheric influence.

It is very seldom that six beings with individuality so strongly marked are thrown together, as these who were assembled for the first time under the same roof. Nora, exuberant in health and superabundant in spirits, always seemed treading on the very verge of propriety, reckless what steps

she took, in the wild excitement of the moment. Julia, with constitutional delicacy and refinement, fearful of going beyond the guarded enclosure which nature and education had prescribed, trembled at her own impulses, pure as they were, lest they should betray her into error. The one was at times too turbulently gay, the other as often too languidly pensive. Linda possessed the golden mean of uniform elasticity. Her gayety was so chastened by refinement, her reflections so enlivened by cheerfulness, and her sensibility so free from morbidness, it was impossible to wish her otherwise than she was. "One shade the more, one ray the less," would mar the harmony of her feminine attributes. She had passed through the refiner's fire, and the elements of her character were not only purified, but harmonized by the great alchymist, suffering. Trials are the strong winds that shake the blossoms from the tree of life, bringing down their fragrance to the heart of the sufferer. But though Linda had known in early life the discipline of adversity, and had reason to bless her stern taskmaster, there were unsounded depths within which no line or plummet had yet fathomed; there were treasures of thought and feeling, hidden like ocean gems in the "sunless retreats" of the deep.

The three young men were types of three distinct classes of character.

Henry, with his bright, hopeful, interchanging spirit, represented those suns of the social system whose centripetal attraction drew toward them living satellites, and which communicate light to every surrounding object.

Robert was the emblem of those who, in ancient days, supported by a sublime enthusiasm, wrought out their destiny in the loneliness of intense thought, travailing in the greatness of their strength, and passing on through fire and flood to the goal of their pilgrimage:—of those who, in the present era, having brought their passions and intellect under the control of a mighty will, devote themselves to one great purpose,

pouring in all the energies of their minds,—tributary streams to the grand reservoir, which is to flow out for the healing of nations :—of those who consume the oil of life over midnight vigils, or traverse the pathless wilderness in searching out the mysteries of nature; or who voluntarily clothe themselves with the sackcloth, and wear the thorny crown of suffering, that they may work out for others an “exceeding weight of glory.”

Roland came between these two, a representative of that noble class of men who, by the union of physical and intellectual power, assume command over inferior minds, and make them subservient to practical good: the bone and sinew, the strength and reliance of the land,—who, without reserving themselves for great occasions to reap whole harvests of renown, go on steadfastly in the path of right,—overcoming every obstacle, and breaking down every circumstance, till the sunshine of success streams unobstructed, and mankind can see the print of their footsteps, and follow in their tread.

But poor Judy! how long she is kept waiting in the door, where she has come to greet the young master! There she stands, with the same white cornucopia on her head, black, shining, smiling, with no perceptible change in her excellent visage, her hands folded over her waist, and her eyes rolled upward with an ecstatic expression. To see Master Robert, who had just come, as it were, from under the wheels of Juggernaut, looking so grand and beautiful, holding that blessed baby in his arms so carefully and gently, and seeming to bless it as it lay nestling there, was a sight that completely overcame the susceptible heart of Judy. She put her apron to her eyes, and an audible sob announced her presence.

Robert looked up, and, rising, gave the young child to Lettuce, its young nurse, for whom her arms involuntarily extended.

“Oh, Master Robert!” said Judy, as he shook most cordially her sable hand; “bless the Lord, that has brought you

back to your country and your people. Bless the Lord for his wondersome goodness to the children of men. I didn't 'spect to see this day, master—but I'm all the more obleeged. And, just to think of this blessed little master, sprung up like a beautiful cornstalk while you've been gone, to make us all young again!"

"We who are young have not had time to grow old in three years, Judy," answered Robert, smiling at her familiar eloquence; "and you, who when a boy I thought was growing old, are younger than ever."

"Content, master, keeps folks young. If I hadn't the best young mistress that ever lived, I should feel mighty old by this time. But she put soft feathers under my old bones, and good things in my cabin; and she and Master Roland never go by me without a pleasant word, that does me a heap of good. Oh! I tell you, Master Robert, content is the greatest thing, arter all."

"Yes, Judy, it is the jewel wanting in the crown of kings—second in value only to the pearl which the merchant purchased with all the gold he had. And that, too, is yours—is it not? You understand me—do you not?"

"Oh, yes, master. You talk so beautifully, I feel e'enamost choked." And Judy raised the whole breadth of her apron, instead of the corner, to her quivering face.

The summons to supper, which had not been long preparing, though it may seem so to the reader, interrupted Judy's hysterical emotions, and brought the party into a close familiar circle; and Robert inquired after old friends, whose names we trust are not forgotten. "Where was Aristides Longwood,—the wizard of the birchen rod, the repeater of golden aphorisms?"

"He still makes his home with us," answered Linda, "from which he occasionally radiates—an eccentric beam of light. He has been absent now several weeks, but will soon return, I trust, to welcome his former pupil and friend. He

has already commenced the education of our little Walton on phrenological principles, and finds him a *beautiful study*."

"Tuscarora, the noble Indian, and Naimuna—where are they?"

"They still occupy the wigwam constructed for them in the forest shades. We must visit them soon, and introduce your Northern friends to these interesting children of the wilderness, whose savage nature is so charmingly softened by the graces of civilization."

Linda, gathering up the severed links of former association, wove them into a chain of events that connected him with the years that had fled. Mr. and Mrs. Carleton still resided in Mobile. They had visited her the preceding winter; and what a happy time they had together, dwelling once more in imagination in the beloved shades of Rosebower, where Mrs. Revere still reigned unrivalled queen over the hearts of the young. Mrs. Lee, the mother of Roland, had died the year after his marriage; and this was the only chasm death had made. Linda told him this in a low voice, for his mother's name was hallowed in Roland's ear, and she breathed it softly, that she might not agitate the sacred foliage that falls over the memory of the dead.

Thus passed away the first evening of reunion. The morning sunbeams glanced upon Nora, flying about the garden, bright as the bird of the tropics, flashing among the shrubbery, and gleaming through the trellis-work; while Julia glided near her, with motions gentle as the dove's, as if she were seeking an olive-branch in these luxuriant bowers. She walked through avenues of orange-trees, whose rich, vivid green leaves quivered above her head with a soft, joyous rustle, half covering and half revealing innumerable balls of vegetable gold; through rows of fragrant lemons, whose fruit melted into a paler gold; and then she seemed lost in a labyrinth of verdure, through which the glowing scarlet of the pomegranate flashed like the wing of the flamingo, and the

sweet-scented jessamine sent the white gleam of its virgin blossoms; and, high above all, stately pillars of this beautiful colonnade, the superb magnolias rose in verdant majesty, and every large, lustrous leaf seemed as a mirror to the sun.

Julia felt a glow of delight pervading her whole being, as she moved on through all this summer pomp, enriching the lap of winter—for it was winter in her own colder latitude,—while clouds of fragrance rolled around her from the rosy festoons that swung from shrub to shrub, making fairy bridges and hanging bowers, frolicking all the time with the morning breeze. She could hardly believe she was in the same world she was twelve months ago, when she saw the snow-spirit whitening, as with bridal wreaths, the woodbine arch above her door, covering with fantastic drapery the naked trees, and spreading over the dismal gray of the landscape a carpet of glittering whiteness. She could hardly believe that she was the same being who then clung so adhesively to the fireside joys of home, thinking there was no happiness beyond its walls. A soft, tropic atmosphere was glowing in her heart, and an under-current of feeling, unstirred before, made sweet, mysterious music as it flowed. The vague, dim, sinking consciousness of threatened extinction, which she had known the preceding evening, vanished with the shadows of night.

When Linda found her in the wilderness of sweets through which she loved to roam in the dewy morning hour, she was charmed with the animation, the glow of her countenance.

“She is lovely,” thought she; and the sentiment passed from her heart to her eyes, and Julia felt it more than if it had been uttered. “I thought, last night, she wanted expression; but I did not do her justice. Robert *must* love her, and then we shall all be happy.”

While she looked earnestly in Julia’s face, holding her hand in hers, she saw the brightest colour suddenly mount into her cheeks, and the soft palm she held throbbed as if with new-born pulsations.

"Ah!" exclaimed she to herself, as the orange boughs parted, and Robert stood in the path before them, "whether wooed or not, I see but too plainly that her heart is won. If he prove insensible to so much loveliness and sensibility, he must be either more or less than man."

She looked at him, anxious to read in his countenance corresponding emotions; but his pale, calm face had an expression such as the prayer-angel leaves on the brow of the worshipper. She saw now, by the clear light of day, that, though unfaded, he was changed. The features, hair, eyes, were the same, and yet they left as different an impression on the mind of the beholder, as a picture seen by the blaze of a conflagration and the same illumined by the holy splendour of moonlight. The night before, the agitation of meeting, after a parting like theirs, had restored to his countenance much of its original expression; now she recognised the Christian missionary, whose lips were worthy to proclaim the tidings of salvation, and whose eloquence was said to roll in "waves of glory" over the dark wastes of paganism.

Nora and Henry met them from a crossing path. How he found her, it would be difficult to tell, but he seemed to have steadied her erratic movements into quite a sober, rational gait. She was certainly on her "good behaviour," and appeared resolved to atone, by her lady-like propriety, for the girlish rudeness of the evening. Something that Henry had been saying had given a feminine expression to her face that was marvellously becoming.

"Have I been trespassing too much?" she asked, raising her hands, which were full of flowers, as she approached Linda. "What a charming, charming place is this! A second edition of the garden of Eden, only revised and improved. Mr. Bellenden said, just now, that you looked like an unfallen Eve. Was not that a pretty speech?"

"Yes; but he paid you a higher compliment than he did me."

"In what way?"

"It is said that a gentleman cannot pay a more graceful compliment to a lady than by speaking high praises of another in her presence."

"That is, he does not believe me mean enough to be envious," exclaimed Nora, looking admiringly at Linda. "No, indeed, I never knew what envy or jealousy meant, by my own experience. I have ten thousand faults, but they are of the open, daring kind. No one enjoys more real, heartfelt pleasure than I do, in admiring all that is beautiful and excellent, though I may be reminded by contrast of my own deficiencies."

"Were you the owner of all the faults you claim," said Henry, his countenance beaming with approbation, "your candour and disinterestedness would redeem them all."

"I did not say that to be praised," said Nora, pulling her flowers with ruthless fingers. "I must be the worst creature in the world, for whenever I utter a becoming sentiment, every one looks as pleased and surprised as if they had found that precious jewel in the toad's head which Shakspeare has described."

"Nora," said Linda, rebukingly, "were you ever serious five minutes in succession?"

"Yes! when I thought I was drowning. Were you ever under the cold water, Linda?"

"Yes," answered she, turning pale at the remembrance. "It seemed that I lived ages in those moments of horror. I never shall forget them."

The scene of the blazing boat, her drowning father, and her own rescue, brought so suddenly to her recollection, made her shiver as if a cold breeze blew upon her. Nora regretted having asked the question, and to turn her thoughts in a different channel, she gave a graphic description of her flight through the woods, her immersion in Stony Creek, and of Henry's gallant bearing.

"Yes!" she said, pausing suddenly, and looking at him with a countenance quite radiant with gratitude; "to his self-possession and courage I owe the salvation of my life. . It was my own headstrong will that plunged me into peril, and I did not deserve that he should share my danger, and avert it so generously for me."

"I did not do it to be praised, Nora," replied Henry, in a tone of deep feeling. "I should have been the veriest monster the world ever knew, to have seen any woman in peril and not attempted her relief. Surely, then"—

"He would have done as much for you, good old aunt Judy, I know he would," said Nora, throwing the flower-petals she had been pulling off and gathering in the palm of her hand, in a very shower over his head.

"That is what Roland said to me," said Linda, unconscious of the application of her words, "when he arrested our horses on the brink of a precipice, and I—I loved him more for his humanity than I admired him for his gallantry."

A visible blush passed over Nora's blooming cheek. She suddenly turned into a different path, where Robert and Julia were slowly walking.

Ever since Robert had confided to Julia so unreservedly the history of his heart, he had treated her with the tenderness and affectionate freedom of a brother. He found a charm in her sympathy that was as irresistible as it was pure. When with her, he thought more of heaven than earth. She seemed to him one of those beings such as Jacob beheld in his dream, one of those coming and going angels commissioned to bear up the thoughts of man on high, and to bring down an answer to his prayers. And he talked to her of heaven and heavenly things, without thinking he was making earth too dear to her. There had been moments at Pine Grove when his heart had felt a new life in her presence, and she seemed to stand on the lower rounds of the ladder, coming with blessings to earth, rather than bearing aspirations to heaven; and had they remained

together there, time perchance might have wrought out Julia's triumph. Will it now?

They all gradually approached the house, which was surrounded by a light, graceful verandah, supported by airy pillars, all covered by some perennial vines. The roses and vines that shaded the windows were planted below, and were trained to climb up, through apertures made for their accommodation.

"I really thought these vines grew out of the floor," said Nora, "and that the flowers grew out of the marble basket last night."

Roland met them on the steps of the verandah.

"Truant," said Linda, "where have you been, when so many attractions tempted you to remain?"

He smiled, but she saw a shadow on his brow. "Ah!" thought she, "is the parting hour come so soon?"

CHAPTER VI.

YES! the parting hour was near. Roland had received a letter from Mr. Hunly, which made it imperative for him to start immediately for New Orleans, and thence he would sail for Liverpool without delay. He had been expecting the summons, he was ready and waiting; and yet he felt an unwillingness to go he had not known on former occasions. It was not that for the first time he was about to cross the ocean, for that seemingly boundless barrier was dwindled into comparative insignificance by the wondrous facilities of navigation. Besides, he had looked forward with rapture to the idea of being far, far away from land, away from the compressing shores and bounding bluffs which restrain the inland streams—with nothing but heaven above, and the waves below, and his own soul within. It was the realization of his boyish

dreams, to be far from land, in a great storm. No matter if the waves ran mountain high—it would be a glorious thing to ride on their foaming crests. Even if the ship went down in the unfathomable abysses of the deep, was it not grander to lie in such a magnificent grave, with an illimitable pall sweeping over him, and the ocean surge murmuring an everlasting requiem, than to be laid in a narrow coffin, then in a six-feet bed of clay? He used to think thus as a boy; but now he was a husband and a father, and the sweet drawings of home ties were stronger than his early yearnings.

And in spite of his implicit confidence in Linda's love and Robert's integrity,—in spite of his freedom from suspicion and jealousy, he could not help wishing the visit of Robert had been deferred till his return. It was a singular coincidence that brought him back from India's distant clime, just as he was called to leave his native land. He did not believe that Robert had ceased to love Linda when he so nobly renounced her. He did not believe that religion destroyed the passions it chastened and hallowed; and, enlightened by the deep love of his own heart, he knew, he saw in the moment of meeting that he still regarded Linda with more than a brother's love. He might struggle with these feelings; he knew he did struggle with them, and perhaps believed them conquered; but they existed, and even the green withs of integrity and holiness might be burst asunder by the giant-hand of passion.

Roland despised himself for suffering such apprehensions to enter his mind. They were unworthy of himself, and insulting to Robert,—ungrateful to Linda, too, whose attachment had been so disinterested and so unwavering. He would sooner cut off the hand on which glittered the golden pledge of her maiden troth, than breathe to her the faintest whisper of distrust. Much as Roland blamed himself for his involuntary emotions, the noblest, most magnanimous man in the universe would have felt as he did, if he loved as devotedly,—the ob-

ject, such a being as Linda,—and his former rival, a Robert Graham.

That evening, just at twilight, as if mutually understanding each other's wishes, Robert and Roland met in an avenue leading from the garden toward a thicket, and Roland, turning, walked in the same direction with Robert, leaving the garden behind. He took his arm, and for a moment neither of them spoke.

"I regret extremely to leave you so soon," said Roland. "We have hardly had time to exchange the courtesies of strangers, much less the confidence of friends. I shall find you here, however, on my return."

"I cannot be idle so long," answered Robert. "As soon as I hear from Rayner, I shall decide in what vineyard to labour: whether beyond the Ganges' idol stream, or amid the darker paganism still found in my native land, I know not yet, —darker, because contrasted with the blaze of Christianity revealing its midnight shadows. I think, however, I shall go back to the scene of my past mission. I have been to the home of my youth, and found it desolate. Friendship has for a while cheered its loneliness, but it is only a passing beam, not an abiding light. Roland Lee,—in the warm bosom of your own blissful home, you cannot dream of the chillness, the abandonment of desolation I experienced when I first entered the shades of Pine Grove, after years of exile, where I knew there was no living heart whose throbs would be quickened by the wanderer's return. Not a light was gleaming in the negro cabins; even my dog slept, unawakened by his master's returning tread. The moon shone with lonely lustre on my mother's tomb, and every ray of welcome seemed clustering round the cold and silent marble. Never have I shed such bitter tears as there mingled with the dews of night. Roland! religion is a great sustainer of man's soul, but it is only the manifestation of the Almighty, not in itself almighty, and it cannot always triumph over the weakness of humanity."

The desolate cry of a lonely heart will sometimes be heard even above the hosannas of angels."

Roland was greatly moved by this unexpected outburst of feeling breaking through the usual restraint of Robert's manner. He hated himself for the inquietude he had felt,—for his selfishness in having grudged him, by whose heart-penury *he* had become rich, the blessings of his own home, when he himself was unable to enjoy them. Though he had not given utterance to his distrust, he was conscious of having admitted it, and it seemed to his high, chivalrous sense of honour that he owed Robert a reparation for an injury, none the less deep for being unknown to him.

"No, Robert," said he, in all the warm frankness of his usual manner; "you must not go. Remain, and be the guardian of my household, the protector of my wife and child. Smile not—I know you will not—at the solemnity of my words. I trust the term of my absence will be short, and with one leap almost we can cross the Atlantic waves. But love makes us cowards. The storm may rise, winds may wreck, or flames consume my bark, as it has done a thousand others. I try to imagine the possibility of such a fate. I try to think of it with submission, in shadowing it forth, but, God forgive me! I cannot—cannot do it. Robert—should it indeed be mine—should the few brief years of happiness God has given me, be all that are allotted"—

He turned aside, choked with emotions he could not repress and was ashamed to betray.

"I did not know I was so weak," he cried, passing his hand hastily over his glistening eyes. "I did not intend to express such a misgiving, not foreboding. No, I never cherished a presentiment; but apprehension is the darkening shadow of love. I tremble, too, at the excess of my happiness. I know that it cannot be always thus, for I am mortal. Some have their whole life-path covered with thin beaten gold, that quivers and breaks at every step; others walk for a while over golden

pavements that seem solid as marble, and guarded on either side by golden walls. Yet the seeming gold may all at once be as brittle glass. They may sink or be crushed in the moment of security. Their gold has not been beaten. They have been wading through it, as it were. But I do not mean to be selfish, Robert; I wanted to speak of you. Why should you be lonely when there is so much loveliness and worth you might appropriate if you wished; so many flowers you might gather to your bosom, and make its wilderness blossom like the rose? Do I displease you?"

"No," answered Robert, with a melancholy smile, "I am grateful for every mark of interest; but every man knows his own capacities for happiness, and his power of imparting it to others. Every man must work out his own destiny, some in the sunshine and some in the shade. I was not born for domestic happiness. The elements of my character are too stormy. Though the bow of peace has been set upon the clouds, the vapours are rolling near the horizon ready to gather at the master's will."

"Nay, Robert, you are as gentle now as the unweaned lamb. No one lives, better fitted than yourself for the happiness to which you deny the claim."

"Do not urge me on this subject," said Robert, and there was something in his countenance that forbade Roland to say more. It was not displeasure, it was not haughtiness or self-will, but he seemed to retire behind a cloud.

They walked on in silence, till they came to a bend in the avenue, when Roland proposed that they should return. The bright, mellow, but brief twilight of Southern climes was already sinking into the gloom of night,—that soft religious gloom, between the splendour of day and the starry pomp of a darker hour. It was the first time these young men had ever walked side by side, in intimate communion with each other, and they felt drawn toward each other by a new and strong attraction—the attraction of mutual confidence. It is

true there had been no formal revelations made, but they both had glimpses of each other's heart by the lightning flash of feeling, showing depths unknown before.

"And you really go to-morrow?" said Robert.

"By the dawn of day—I shall not see you again alone, and once more I repeat, that I go in the full confidence, that should danger or sorrow approach those far dearer than my own life, you will guard them with a brother's arm and a father's heart."

"Think of me as brother, father, protector, friend," answered Robert, with thrilling emphasis, "and by every holy association connected with each sacred office, your noble confidence shall never be betrayed."

Roland returned the firm grasp of his hand with a pressure that spoke volumes. As they passed through the garden, they saw light forms moving in the verandah, and they heard the sound of mingling voices; but Linda's form was not there, Linda's voice was not heard in the mingling sounds. She was sitting alone at the window of her own room, behind the rose-coloured curtains, trying to keep back her fast-rising tears. It was a low window, in whose shaded recess she often sat with Roland, especially at this serene, dusky hour. She was sure he would come to her when he missed her from the family group, and she breathed on the palm of her hand and pressed it on her dewy eyes, to dry up the moisture that would gather beneath their drooping lashes.

"Is this keeping your promise, Linda?" said he, lifting the curtain and taking a seat by her side. "Is this the dauntless heroine, who sometimes declares that she was born to be a hero's wife, and follow, if need be, her husband to the battle-field? Have I not heard you extol the noble dames of the Revolution, for their Spartan fortitude and unblenching resolution. This is a very trifling occasion, I know;" added he, gently drawing her hand from her eyes, and smiling as she concealed them again on his bosom. "The daughters of

fashion would laugh to see you send one sigh after your husband on such a mere pleasure voyage as I am about to take. Think how soon I may return, and what charming companions you have to beguile the hours of my absence. I fear you will not miss me at all."

"Oh, Roland, how can you speak thus, when you know I live but in you?"

"You forget that powerful rival, who has infused the poison of jealousy in the fountains of my joy—our own bewitching boy. Is not the son already dearer than the father? Methinks he ought to be."

"Ingrate!" exclaimed Linda, "you know that I love him more for your own sake even than his own. Even now I left him, stretching out his little arms for me to caress him, that I might sit lonely here and think of you."

"I am not worthy of so much love, my Linda," cried he, clasping her to his heart with passionate tenderness, and kissing once and again her pale cheek. "It humbles, while it exalts me. Oh! how happy we have been together, Linda! Have we not? Our love has been all sunshine. No cloud, not the faintest shadow of one, has dimmed its lustre or chilled its warmth. The cold breath of suspicion has never blighted one bosom flower. Tell me, my own dear wife, before the hearts now throbbing as one are separated from each other, have I ever planted one pang in the bosom I would die to defend? Tell me, if I have ever unconsciously wounded, by a rude or thoughtless word. Man's nature, at the best, is but rough compared with woman's, and our softest touches may sometimes bruise its gentleness."

"Oh, Roland—who so gentle, so loving and kind, as you have always been? I have never known a wish that you have not anticipated, a joy that you have not crowned with a brighter blessing. There are few that can feel as we do, for we have neither of us ever known even a fancied preference for another. We have given each other all the wealth of love we

had. Oh, yes ! from the moment when I first knew you to the present hour, you have been and ever will be the guardian angel of my life."

"Ever will be, Linda?" he repeated, in the deep, tremulous under-tones of tenderness and love. "Bless you, ten thousand times, for a confession which, often heard, never made my heart vibrate to such sweet, yet melancholy music before. It will come to me when pacing the reeling deck or watching the midnight billows. But even your love cannot stretch into the future, Linda. No pioneer has ever cleared its untrodden waste, to tell us where our feet may travel. Other guardian angels may be waiting to assume my mission, more watchful and more faithful than I have been—No—I recall the words—that they could never be."

There are moments in the experience of every individual when the tide of the heart overflows, like the Egyptian river, and cannot be restrained. Few utter all that the spirit prompts. An hermetic seal closes the lips that burn with the unuttered thought. Because brass is more sounding than gold, they wrap themselves in silence, and then wonder they are not understood. This is not well, for speech manifests the abundant heart, and silence is the atmosphere of death. How many, after parting with the friend whom they have never more beheld, have sighed, oh ! how unavailingly, over the remembrance of the cold parting hour!

"If they had only known how I loved them ! If I had only breathed with my lips the language of my soul !" is the cry that rises from the weeping heart, when left to pour out its love and sorrow into

"The dull, cold ear of death."

Oh, thou, whoever thou art, who hast guardianship over one fond heart, fear not to breathe in words the tenderness thou art content only to feel. Break down the barrier of pride that opposes thine utterance, and let thy words gush forth in

showers of tenderness, fertilizing the dry and thirsty heart. The time may soon come when the hand which now seeks the warm pressure of yours will be cold and pulseless,—when the rosy doors of speech, which your silence has so often closed, will be shut forever: for there is no voice in the grave, nor any fond device. The electric wire is broken that sent the thrill from heart to heart. The lightning glance is quenched in night. The living is cut off from the dead. Love stands shivering on the brink of the dividing chasm, and over its bridgeless depths goes forth the wailing accents—

“Come back, poor cheated heart, receive all the wealth of which thou hast been defrauded. Roll away the stone from the door of the sepulchre, even as I roll it away from the gates of speech, and learn the height, the length, the depth of my unuttered love.”

The only answer is the melancholy wind, that shakes the dew from the grave-grass and the willow’s weeping foliage.

Linda did not forget what was due to her friends, in the indulgence of selfish regret. She joined the evening circle, not gay, but cheerful; and Roland never exerted himself more for the social happiness of his guests. Nora did not disturb with discordant merriment the general harmony of feeling, and Henry repeated to himself a hundred times—

“How charming Nora can be when she pleases!”

The “charming Nora” was very sorry that Roland was going to leave them, and expressed her regret in very animated terms. Julia was sorry, too, but she could not tell him so, as Nora did. He had already won much of her admiration and esteem, but she still wondered that Linda should prefer him to Robert Graham. It was surprising, incredible. She did not reflect that she was looking at Robert through the medium of her own heart and imagination, while Linda beheld Roland through her own.

Roland was to start by dawn of day. Robert and Henry were to accompany him to his boat, which lay at the landing

just below Rosavilla. He resolved to steal silently away without awaking Linda, so as to spare himself the pain of saying good-by. They sat up till past the midnight hour, and slumber falls heavily on lids wet with tears, so that it was easy to accomplish his design.

The waning moon mingled its light with the faint dawn of awakening day. It bathed the room in a soft flood of light, and hung like a silver drapery over the bed where Linda slept. The little crib, where the baby slumbered, and which was placed near her own couch, was also flooded with the same glimmering lustre. Roland, ready for departure, stood between the two,—gazing first on one, then the other, with the “longing, lingering look” of intense affection. He did not fear that his kisses would awaken the sleeping infant, so closely locked were his golden dreams, and, bending over him, he kissed his brow, cheek, and lips, and every curl of his silken hair. The child smiled, as they say babies do when the angels whisper to them, and its long eyelashes quivered as if with dreaming rapture.

“Heaven bless thee, my darling, my beautiful, innocent boy!” said Roland, within himself. “Thou wilt not miss me, but I shall carry thee with me in my heart of hearts, thou morning-flower of Paradise. And thou, my best beloved,” turning to his unconscious wife—

“Oh! what a charm to love’s fond eye
Are beauties that in slumber lie,
When all-confiding they are given
To faith, that’s watched alone by heaven.”

Spell-bound by this enchantment, Roland lingered, scarcely daring to breathe, lest he should disturb the serene depth of her repose. She was pale, but it was the soft palleness of the pearl, made lustrous by the moonlight. She seemed to melt into the rays, so entirely they harmonized with the pensive sweetness of her reposing features. One

fair hand lay drooping over the cover; on the other her cheek was pillowed. Borne down by the oppressive tenderness of his emotions, Roland knelt by the bedside, and his soul went up in prayer to God for the treasures he had committed to his keeping.

"I will not wake thee, my beloved," he sighed, rising from his knees, and bending his face to hers; "I will not wake thee even by a kiss; but I will bless thee now—and bless thee forever."

Pressing his lips on a soft ringlet that lay slumberously on the sheet, he turned away and left the room.

As he passed out into the open air, he paused under the shade of the verandah, that he might meet his friends with a tranquil brow. The singular lustre of the hour impressed him, pre-occupied as he was, with a new sense of beauty. The dim gold of the morning twilight was gleaming up from the verge of the eastern horizon in lengthening radii, and melted off in pencilled softness on a sea of azure; while the moon, shining with languishing glory, seemed to mourn over the world from which it was about to withdraw its light.

The voices of his friends, who were ready to accompany him to the river, and the awakening sounds of negro life heard in the yard, warned Roland that the moment of departure was arrived, and no one ever waited for him. He was gone, and the mistress of Rosavilla felt the first day of absence long and desolate.

CHAPTER VII.

AN incident occurred a short time after Roland's departure which interrupted, in a startling manner, the quietude of the household.

It was in the early evening, Southern, not Northern evening, commencing after the sun's zenith hour, Lettuce, the sub-nurse of little Walton, (Judy considered herself the principal,) was in the habit of carrying him abroad in pleasant weather, and sometimes she indulged her rambling propensities farther than Linda would have approved, had she been aware of the length of her excursions. But as the child was exceedingly fond of her, and she always brought him back in safety, with his baby cheeks blooming with exercise and excitement, Linda did not dream of danger, especially on her own grounds. She and Roland often accompanied them; but now Roland was gone, and she had friends with her whose demands upon her time and attention forbade the excessive indulgence of a mother's cares. Every bright, sunny day, little Walton, looking, as Aunt Judy said, "like a show baby of the Lord," was carried out by his proud young nurse, who thought his little sky-blue cloak, edged with snowy ermine, his white beaver hat and feathers, fastened under his chin with blue ribands, were the "beautifullest things" her eye ever beheld; far more beautiful than the fair baby himself, dearly as she loved him. Lettuce was a smart, trim, bright-looking girl herself, who was very fond of dressing nicely, and her inclination was always indulged. The nurse of little Master Walton respected herself, and she would have thought it profanation to wait upon the child in soiled and untidy garments. So they were quite a remarkable pair, Lettuce and the infant master of Rosavilla; and as they were seen gliding about the woods, he in his princely costume, and she with a handkerchief of bright yel-

low or brilliant scarlet twisted coquettishly round her head, they lighted them up with a glow and a colouring, as if the wings of gorgeous plumed birds were fluttering among the shades. Sometimes Lettuce would spread her bright-plaided handkerchief on the ground, and placing the baby on the mimic carpet, fill his lap with hickory nuts, or some of nature's wild toys, while she explored some dingle where she did not think it prudent to take him. He was the most fearless little creature in the world, and would sit alone in the deep woods, looking round on the tall trees, wondering (we suppose) if they were whispering all the time of him, or looking up to the blue sky, that peeped through their green tuft-knots, with his soft, innocent hazel eyes. It is true Lettuce never left him but a few moments at a time, for he was dear to her as the apple of her eye; but she loved freedom, and took great delight in poking about among old, dry leaves, peering into hollow trees, and scraping moss from the ancient bark. Perhaps she had dreamed of finding some hidden treasure, or was seeking a charm against the witches; she certainly had an exploring propensity, which endangered in one instance the safety of her precious young charge.

One evening Robert was returning from the cabin of Tuscarora by the path in which Lettuce was roaming. He was walking slowly, absorbed in meditation, when his attention was arrested by the figure of a man stealing along through the woods directly in front of him. He evidently did not perceive the approach of Robert, as his back was to him, and Robert's slow footsteps on the sandy path roused no echo to alarm the ear. He was dressed like a sailor, with a red woollen shirt and blue trousers. He had, however, a Spanish sombrero on his head, and his long black hair, and the dark edge of skin visible on his neck, which was all Robert could now see, indicated that he belonged to the Spanish or Indian race. Why was this man skulking along so stealthily, and looking before him with such an intent gaze, as his bending neck and advanced

head betokened? He might be a hunter. He held a rifle in his left hand, but these woods skirted the plantation, and the hunter sought in more unfrequented shades the wild trophies of the chase. Whatever was his object, there was something dark and ruffian-like in his appearance that steadied the gaze of Robert. Slowly, silently he followed his steps, till a glimpse of little Walton's sky-blue cloak appeared, just beside the path before them. The child was seated on the ground, in the sweet fearlessness of innocence, and looked up into the dark, ferocious face coming near him with mute astonishment. Before his astonishment had time to ripen into terror, or to manifest itself as such, the ruffian seized the infant in his arms, and leaping across the path, plunged into the woods. Then it gave vent to the most piercing shrieks, which the wretch stifled with his right hand, still grasping his rifle in the other, with his left arm round the child. Lettuce came rushing from her woody recess, answering shriek for shriek, and looking round her in vacant horror. But there was one, with steps fleeter than hers, pursuing the child-robber swift as an avenging angel. Robert was unarmed, but he thought not of that. He thought only that it was Linda's child, the child committed to his protection by a confiding father. He did not run, he flew; he crushed the branches that impeded his way; but the ruffian flew also, and was at least a hundred yards in advance. But fast as he ran, Robert felt that he was gaining on him. The forked lightning is hardly swifter than his steps. All at once the ruffian seemed endowed with superhuman speed, and the distance widened between them.

"My God!" cried Robert; "he escapes me! Linda's child is lost."

But, even as he spoke, the man's foot stumbled against a gnarled root covered with leaves, and the rifle dropped from his hand. As he stooped to pick it up, the avenger was upon him, his shoulder wrenched with an iron grasp, and the child rent from his desperate grasp.

The rifle, too—for Robert seemed to have the strength of a giant in his single arm. The moment he felt the soft bosom of the child pressed against his own, a shiver of delight, gratitude, transport, ran through his frame.

"Wretch! ruffian!" he cried; "how dare you lay hands on this infant? What urged you to such a fiendish deed?"

The man, deprived of his rifle, cowered before the indignant mien of Robert, whose eyes rained fire from their flashing orbs. Without uttering a syllable, he turned away, and ran into the woods as fast as his feet could carry him.

Robert drew a relieving breath. He was grateful that the rescue had been accomplished without spilling the blood of the robber or his own. The poor, terrified infant appeared to know that it was in the arms of a friend, for it clung to him closer and closer, putting its arms round his neck, and pressing its face on his breast, as if to shut out the hideous aspect that had lately scowled above it.

Inexpressibly touched by the innocent confidence so sweetly manifested, Robert turned on his homeward way, refusing to yield up his charge to Lettuce, who was now crying as audibly for joy as she had screamed vociferously from terror. He walked leisurely, still panting from the recent chase, when suddenly the report of a pistol was heard behind, and a bullet passed through his left arm near the shoulder, grazing against the child's cloak. He was scarcely conscious of the wound till the infant fell from his grasp. Quick as thought, he caught it with his right arm, still retaining the rifle as a weapon of defence. The ruffian must have had a pistol in his bosom, and returned upon the footsteps of him who had robbed him of his prey. Thinking he might be one of a band lurking in the woods, Robert hastened on, the blood flowing from his wounded arm, and reddening the path behind him. Though he was no longer subject to those hemorrhages which had brought him to the threshold of the grave, he had not the giant strength that could bear, unmoved, so sudden a shock;

and, exhausted by his previous efforts, he began to feel dizzy and faint. He was now near the garden-gate, and secure from pursuit. He dropped the rifle, or rather left it leaning against the wall,—consulting in every thing the safety of the child. It might go off in falling to the ground, though it had not done so in the ruffian's hand. He was sorry to stain the beautiful flowery avenues with his fast-dripping blood, and he was sorry to think of the terror Linda would feel when she saw her infant stained by the sanguinary stream. The charming picture he had drawn of placing it in her arms, and receiving his reward in her glance of grateful affection, vanished in a dim, gray cloud. It seemed floating before his eyes, as he ascended the steps, crossed the hall, and entered the room where Linda sat, with Nora and Julia, unconscious of the danger from which her infant had been rescued.

He paused on the threshold, unwilling to bring his bloody tracks in that peaceful, charming retreat; but, before he could speak the words that hovered on his lips, Linda sprang up, with a wild cry, and rushed toward him.

“Oh, Robert!—oh, my child! Good God—’tis covered with blood!”

“’Tis *my* blood, Linda,” exclaimed Robert, unconsciously repeating the words of the dying Rolla, when he gave her rescued child to Cora’s arms; and, staggering forward, he sank, pale and exhausted, at Linda’s feet. The infant smiled in its mother’s face, and she knew that it was safe. But Robert—looking so like death, lying there bathed in blood, that still kept flowing from some unseen wound—what had befallen him? Had he sacrificed himself to save her child? She heeded not the screams of Nora, who repeatedly ejaculated Julia’s name in terrified accents; she scarcely heeded when some one took the infant from her; she knelt over the bleeding Robert, and, putting her arms wildly round him, entreated him to tell her that he was not wounded unto death,—that her child’s life was not purchased by his own.

"Oh, Robert, dear brother!" she cried, "speak, and tell me what this means."

Robert, who was faint from loss of blood, not insensible, would willingly have yielded up life itself for these demonstrations of affection, though emanating only from a sister's love. He could not help thinking it would be sweet to die thus, and end the bosom strife which had so often left him weak, if not vanquished; but he knew the wound was not dangerous,—was comparatively slight,—and he hastened to allay her fears.

"Bind your handkerchief round my arm, that I may not efface all your roses," said he, looking, with a faint smile, at the carpet where he lay. "I suffer from nothing but the loss of blood. The ball passed through my arm, and made only a flesh-wound."

Linda shuddered, and, taking her handkerchief, bound it round his arm; but seeing the linen reddening as she swathed it, she unfolded a light scarf from her shoulders, and bound that round it also. Her hands trembled, the tears dropped from her eyes, her colour came and went, and, as soon as she had finished, she bowed her head on her clasped hands, exclaiming—

"Oh, Robert, from what dreadful doom have you saved my child?"

"It is all over now," he cried, raising himself from the floor, and, bending on one knee beside her, he supported her with his unwounded arm. "You weep, Linda; but I know they are tears of joy and gratitude. When you are more composed, I will relate to you all you owe to the guardian God of innocence. But look, Linda,—merciful heaven! am I the cause of this?"

As he raised his head from its bending position, he saw through the opened doors a group assembled in the opposite room round a sofa, on which Julia reclined with such a death-

resembling aspect, it is not strange that Robert sprang to his feet, forgetting his weakness in new alarm.

As Julia had told Nora, she had a constitutional tendency to faint at the sight of blood. Even a drop of blood from her own finger following the needle's point made her sick and pale. What wonder, then, she should fall in a death-like swoon at the aspect of the bleeding Robert? She sank, inanimate as a corpse, into Nora's arms the moment Robert fell at Linda's feet; and Nora, though shrieking with terror, had presence of mind enough to carry her into another apartment, where the negro women soon collected. It was well for Robert that the current of feeling was thus divided, or he might have been deluged with the cologne which Nora dashed so profusely on Julia's head. She came near pouring a bottle of hartshorn in her face, but fortunately Aunt Judy caught it from her hand in time to prevent the catastrophe.

Poor Aunt Judy! she hardly knew which way to turn, in the ubiquity of her sympathy. On one side, the young master, bleeding on the floor; on the other, the "blessed baby," looking as if it had just escaped from the lion's jaws, all spotted with blood; and this beautiful young creature, lying still and white as a corpse, and Miss Nora taking on like a distracted person, and Lettuce, standing like a big baby, doing nothing but cry and snivel, instead of trying "to help a body in their diversity."

"Praise a Lord!" cried Judy, when Robert and Linda entered the room, and pressed toward the couch where Julia lay, "Praise a Lord!" pushing Lettuce vigorously aside, and giving somebody else a momentum backward. "The master's on his feet agin—though he looks as white as the dead—and see, the young lady opens her eyes as he comes near, just as if he worked a miracle. There, honey, lie still, and keep your brains from a swimming."

When Julia opened her eyes, and saw Robert, with bandaged arm and pallid cheek, standing over her, she looked

at first amazed and terrified, then a bright ray of joy and gratitude shone, as through a mist, and lighted up her face.

"I thought I saw you bleeding to death," she said, closing her eyes again, with a shiver at the recollection.

"She's cold," cried Aunt Judy, shooting out of the room for a blanket; "and it's no wonder, when Miss Nora kept a-drownding her with all sorts o' sperrit. If I could only have got some burnt feathers under her nose, she'd been as well as ever by this time."

"I grieve that I have alarmed you so much, Julia," said Robert, taking her hand, which was still deadly cold; "I ought not to have rushed in, in such a frightful manner, but I hardly knew what I was doing. I have only lost a little blood, which I doubt not will do me good. I am quite well now."

"But are you not wounded?" she asked, the warm blood flowing into her hand, and beginning to colour her white cheeks.

"A mere trifle; I regret it only as it has been the cause of alarm to others. I cannot forgive myself for the mischief I have done."

"She always faints at the sight of blood," said Nora, with the true instinct of womankind; "she's a poor, dear little coward, who ought to be put up in cotton, like those little French essence bottles, that a mere touch will break."

"I am good for nothing," said Julia, who felt in every languid vein electric life returning; "I wish I did not give so much trouble to my friends. Indeed, you are all too kind, too good. Do not stand by me looking so pale," added she, to Robert, gently drawing away the hand which was only too willing to linger in the clasp of his. "And you, dear Linda, never mind my wet locks. They will dry of themselves ere long."

Julia now seemed quite restored. Her cheeks had a bright, rose spot, and her eyes the sapphire's blue. She sat

up, and gathering her saturated tresses, the odorous waters with which they had been bathed perfumed the apartment with fresh fragrance.

"You should be willing to faint once in a while," said Linda, looking at her with painful interest, "since you wake to such brilliant life. Do you feel as well as you look?"

"Oh, yes," said she, with animation. "I will go into my room now, that Henry, when he comes in, may not be alarmed at my dishevelled appearance."

She rose, and attempted to walk, but faltered, and sat down again.

"Perhaps I had better keep still a little longer," said she, and the colour went out in her cheek, like a flame extinguished by the wind.

"You must not stay here, wet and chill," cried Linda, watching her fluctuating colour and quick-drawn breath with increasing anxiety; "you *must* go to your room, and keep perfectly quiet the remainder of the evening."

"Let me assist you," said Robert; "I have one sound arm, capable of supporting a far heavier burden."

And putting it round her waist, he raised her from the sofa, and carried her as easily and tenderly as he had the little Walton, to the door of her apartment.

"You are very good," said she, smiling and blushing; "Henry could not be kinder."

"Don't thank him," cried Nora, with a look full of gratitude; "I am sure you are under no obligations to him. After frightening you out of your senses, and all the rest of us, too, the least he can do is this. You little, downy feather, you could ride on a butterfly's wing."

"I cannot help thanking him," said Julia, after listening till she could no longer hear his footsteps in the hall, "to be so thoughtful of me, when he must be suffering himself. Something dreadful must have happened. I could not ask him now. And tell me, Nora, was the sweet baby hurt?"

"Not a bit. Did you not hear him say, as he fell, 'Tis my blood, Linda?' Oh! he did look like a dying man then. I would have fainted myself if you hadn't got the start of me. But mercy on me! I hadn't time to think of it, so much was happening at one moment; Linda rushing to Robert and snatching her baby with such a thrilling cry, Aunt Judy tearing in and snatching the baby from her, then Linda weeping on Robert's neck, and you falling like a piece of lead on my bosom. Was it not a scene? I wish Henry had been here. I wonder what he would have done. Perhaps *he* would have fainted at *my* feet. Do tell me, Julia, how you do contrive to faint. It looks so interesting, and creates such a sensation."

"Do you think it affectation in me, Nora?" asked Julia, in a wounded tone. "If you knew the deadly, sickening feeling that precedes and follows this insensibility, you could not think it possible to affect it."

"I do not think so. No, indeed. There was reality enough in your clay-cold face, and white marble lips, to make me even now peer into the blue depths of your eyes, to see if the balls are in motion. But seriously, my darling Julia, I do not like to be so rude in health, and wear this unvarying apple bloom. I never look in the glass, without thinking my name should be Bouncing Bet, or Kitty Clover."

While Nora's thoughts, dancing on the surface of her mind, skipped forth in words, she was acting as Julia's *tire-woman*, changing her moistened garments, and drying with the brush the dripping gold of her hair. Then she made her lie down on the bed, while she carelessly arranged her own wild, gipsy locks.

"Be my looking-glass, sweet Julia," said she, twisting her fingers here and there in the dark labyrinth; "tell me if that will do. Is that pretty?" casting her eye up toward a curl that threw its shadow on her brow.

"Nothing could be more graceful," replied Julia. "What is the reason that when I look at you, I think you must have

drest yourself by a mountain stream, making a mirror of its wave?"

"Do you indeed think so, charming creature? I shall like myself better for inspiring so sweet an idea. I will look at myself."

As she jumped up and went to the glass, her eye caught a glimpse of figures walking in the avenue in front of the house, and she stopped at the window which she was passing.

"There is Linda," she cried, "walking with Robert, and, would you believe it? he looks almost as well as ever. He is trying to lead her in a different direction that she may not see his bloody tracks. The baby hurt! no, indeed. He is smiling in her arms, in a rose-coloured dress, looking as if nothing had happened. Robert is telling her all about it, I know, and I wish I was there to hear it. How earnest and serious he looks, and with what breathless interest she listens! Dear me! I wonder what makes her take that baby herself when she has so many negroes to wait on her. She is too lovely, too ethereal for such common offices. There, I am glad Lettuce has taken it. She and Robert look so much more romantic without it."

"Nora, you have a heart. You know you have. Why do you take such pains to hide it?"

"What have I said that implied I had no heart?"

"You spoke as if you did not love children,—and Walton is such a beautiful child, it seems as if he could belong to no other than Linda. Then, she has just feared for him, and fear for the safety of those we love always makes us more loving."

"Do you not think Linda lovely?" asked Nora, still watching her and Robert from the window where she stood.

"Surpassingly so," answered Julia, and an involuntarily sigh escaped her lips. "There is about her a charm, a fascination, which I constantly feel, but cannot define."

"Do you know, Julia," said the thoughtless Nora, "that

if I were Roland Lee, I would not like to leave my wife with such a splendid creature as Robert, knowing how passionately he once loved her; and," lowering her voice, while she tripped up to the bed-side, "I do believe he loves her yet, whether he knows it himself or not."

"Do you think so?" said Julia, and the tone in which she uttered the simple interrogation expressed as much anguish as if a knife had entered her heart. "Do you think so?"

"Julia," said Nora, fixing on her her dark bright eyes, "*you* have a heart, if I have not." Then, with an instantaneous change of voice and countenance, she exclaimed,—

"I would sooner rend from its roots this wayward tongue, than willingly give you a moment's pain. Think so! No—I don't think so. It is only my insufferable nonsense."

"Do not recall your words, because you believe you have wounded me," said Julia, pressing her hand on her fluttering heart,—that heart whose beatings were fearfully quickened by every sudden emotion. "I cannot help being shocked at the thought of one, who seems so pure and good, loving the wedded wife of another. Surely you do greatly wrong him."

"I dare say I do. I know I do," answered Nora, quickly; "that is, I dare say I am mistaken. But I do not see how this love, supposing it exists, which is all nonsense, detracts from his goodness or piety."

"Oh, Nora, how can you say so? Is it not breaking the canons of the living God? and he too a Christian minister, a heaven-devoted missionary!"

"It is not the *feeling* passion, but indulging it, that constitutes a sin," said Nora, with the gravity of a sage. "Supposing a ruffian came to your door and knocked, and clamoured for admission, you could not help it, could you? But you could help opening the door, taking him by the hand, and giving him the welcome of a friend. Besides," she added, forgetting in her earnestness the caution she had just imposed on herself, "how can we expect that the love which has been

the growth of years, and entwined with the very life-chords of one's being, to pass away like the ephemera of a summer's day? That love itself is holy as the religion that sanctifies and controls it."

This was one of those sunbursts of feeling which at rare intervals flashed out on the light foam of Nora's mind. Julia felt the truth of what she uttered, the more deeply because it came from her usually gay and unreflecting lips; and the morning dream of hope vanished. She wanted to be alone. Kind as Nora was, there was something in her exultant vitality and independence of character that contrasted too painfully with her own weakness.

"Leave me, dear Nora," she said; "all I need is rest. Go and watch for Henry's coming, that he may not be alarmed as we have been. You will learn, too, all that has happened, and tell it again to me."

Nora was indeed full of curiosity which she was anxious to gratify, and believing Julia ought to rest, she hastened to obey her injunctions. She felt uncomfortable, too, for what she had said of Robert, and pained for its effect on Julia. She had really believed, when at Pine Grove, that Robert was transferring his affections to Julia, and, as usual, uttered what she believed; but she dreamed not of the mighty hold he had taken on her childlike and susceptible heart.

When Julia found herself alone, the strained chord of her sensibility relaxed, and drawing the sheet over her face she wept, as the young child weeps, without any effort at self-control. She did not ask herself why she wept, or why she felt all at once so desolate and homesick, when she had been so happy since the first night of her arrival. She wished she had never left her Northern home. She would have given worlds to lay her head on her mother's bosom, to feel the pressure of her sister's gentle hand. These deadly fainting-fits always left her so weak, so palpitating and nervous, their remembrance was like the shadow of death.

There was a light tap at the door,—and—

“May I come in, sister?” sounded so like a voice from home, that when Henry entered and came up to the bedside, she could not help throwing her arms round his neck and bursting into a fresh flood of tears.

“Why Júlia, my darling, what is the matter?” he cried, alarmed at her passionate sobs. “Why do you weep so bitterly? What *can* have occurred? Speak, Julia,—I know not what to think!”

“Nothing—nothing,” she cried, hiding her face on his bosom, and ashamed of her emotion, so inexplicable even to herself; “I feel so weak, so *gone*, as it were,—I cannot help it.”

“Poor child—poor child,” said he, tenderly, smoothing back her disordered hair and kissing her throbbing temples; “I thought you were growing stronger. They told me you had fainted. Is that all, sweet sister? I am unspeakably relieved. This nervous depression will soon pass away. Nothing does one so much good as a hearty fit of crying once in a while. It carries off the cobwebs and dust from the brain. Come, cheer up, Julia—I have brought you letters from home,—all overflowing with the elixir of affection. Keep still, and I will read them aloud.”

Julia listened to the sweet breathings of family love, and her spirit was lulled by their harmony.

“Oh, Henry,” she cried, pressing each signature to her quivering lips, “let us return. Why should we linger in the land of strangers, when there are those afar who love us dearer than all?”

“Not at this season, Julia. Impossible! You would be in far greater danger than ever. The Northern winds would chill you to the heart’s core after inhaling this soft, delicious atmosphere. Are you not happy here, my sister? Surely every one is kind.”

“Oh, yes,—I know they are.”

“Then is it not ungrateful to wish to leave them so soon,

when you *must* be gaining health, whether you know it or not. I felt, myself, some misgivings about coming to an entire stranger's; but we have been so cordially welcomed, so hospitably entertained, so urgently pressed to remain longer, that I do not see how we can make a graceful congée quite so soon, especially as Captain Lee is gone, and his wife relies on us, in some measure, to fill the household void he has made."

"I do not think I am getting better, Henry," said Julia, taking his hand and laying it on her heart; "feel this wild beating. Such incessant flutterings must break the frail bars of the cage ere long. I did not feel so at home."

"You are nervous, dear sister," he answered, suppressing his rising solicitude; "it is owing to the fright you have received. You must take an anodyne. It is all you need. Robert told me I had better bring you one."

The sudden change of her countenance as he uttered the name of Robert, the tremulous agitation, the mantling glow, did not escape his observation, and as he perused her face his brow darkened. Her passionate tears, her desire to return immediately, when she had seemed so charmed with the South, so enchanted with her new friends, must have some mysterious source. Was he trifling with her guilelessness and simplicity, or had her young affection wandered like stray lambs to a barren plain? Were the snowy wings of her heart indeed fluttering for the pure air of heaven? Was he doomed to see all that he loved fade away and die? As these questions arose in his mind, the severity of deep, anxious thought hardened his countenance.

"Are you angry with me, brother?" asked Julia, timidly.

"Angry with you!—Good heavens! No. Why do you dream of such a thing?"

"It seemed as if a shadow came between me and the sunshine. *You* looked cold, and *I* felt so."

"You should be called Mimosa, Julia, you are so sensitive. What a pity you could not borrow some of Nora's superfluous

carelessness. She *can* feel, however, can she not, on extraordinary occasions?"

"I think she is capable of great feeling," answered Julia; "but she has never known sorrow yet."

"She is motherless."

"Yes,—but her mother died when she was too young to feel the loss."

"Sorrow and love are the two great refiners of the human heart. Nora, then, is a stranger to both?"

The assertion was uttered in an interrogative tone.

"I believe she is," answered Julia. "I did think—that is—I once thought"—she paused in evident embarrassment, then continued,—"I imagined, when I first knew her, that she might love Robert Graham, but I was probably mistaken."

"Why did you suppose so?" asked Henry, and his face glowed with excitement.

"I don't know," said Julia, artlessly, "only it seemed so natural that she should; and she always spoke of him with so much admiration."

"Open praise does not always betray secret love," answered Henry, rising. "She is an enigma that would puzzle a more subtle brain than yours."

"She is all that is tender and affectionate to me," said Julia, fearful that she had injured Nora in Henry's estimation, by the suggestion she had made; "and lightly as she generally talks, she sometimes expresses sentiments of the most exalted kind. I know not why you call her an enigma. She is ingenuous even to a fault."

"She is a living kaleidoscope," replied Henry, his countenance lighting up with pleasure at Julia's earnest vindication of her friend. "She never exhibits twice the same figure or colouring of mind. She is an Aurora Borealis, sparkling in a clear electric atmosphere. She is a civilized gipsy, an embodied Allegro. I cannot think of any more similitudes just now, so I will go and send you the anodyne, which will attract

the soft dews of sleep to your drooping lids, and sooth the flutterer in your bosom to sweet repose."

"Kind and gentle brother!" said Julia, as he closed the door with a cautious hand, "how can I feel desolate, folded in the cherishing warmth of thy fraternal love? And Robert, too! he calls me his adopted sister—his soul's friend. Forgive me, thou divine Searcher of hearts, compassionate rememberer of the dust thou hast animated," she murmured, raising her submissive eyes to heaven, "if I have yearned for a dearer title. Let this short, fleeting dream of life be filled with holier thoughts, diviner aspirations. Let me not indulge in vain cravings for earthly love, when the arms of a heavenly Bridegroom may soon enfold me. Like the daughter of Jephthah, I will pass to the mount of sacrifice, adorned with the garlands of youth, and my companions will weep over my fate. But the early-called are God's beloved. He commanded the sons of Judah to lay unblemished lambs upon his altar; and fresh and unleavened was the bread of consecration."

CHAPTER VIII.

JULIA slept under the influence of a gentle opiate. Nora sat at the piano, now playing a gay quickstep or airy waltz, and now talking with Henry, who stood beside the music-stool, while she passed the fingers of her right hand lightly over the keys.

Linda was seated in the opposite room to the one in which she first greeted her guests. Robert reclined on a sofa near her, for he felt languid from the recent effusion of blood. Aunt Judy had dressed his wound in a scientific manner; and, with his arm suspended in a sling, he looked, as his dark leech observed, "like the hero of a militia."

Linda sat—her cheek leaning on her hand—in a pensive,

thoughtful mood. The danger from which her child had escaped made her tremble for that which might still be impending over him. What secret, unknown enemy was lurking near, seeking to pierce her or Roland through the bosom of their infant? What motive could prompt so strange an outrage? Who was the instigator or perpetrator of the cruel deed? She would be henceforth subject to thick-coming apprehensions. Every feeling of security was lost. She would never more suffer him to go beyond the limits of the garden, lest the human wolf should be still prowling in ambush, to rob her of her lamb. Again and again she asked Robert to describe the appearance, the features of the ruffian. She could not identify them with any one she had ever seen. Robert endeavoured to allay her fears of having a secret enemy, by telling her that the man was probably a vagabond, who, attracted by the richness of the child's dress, resolved to steal it, that he might profit by the reward which would be offered for its restoration.

"Oh, what do I not owe you, Robert!" said Linda, her eyes filling with grateful tears. "My brother, my friend, guardian of my child! how will Roland bless you, on his return, for the salvation of his soul's treasure—for mine too, Robert; for, had you not rescued Walton, my reason would have yielded to a mother's agony. Even now, I shudder at the wretchedness that would have been ours had you not interposed as a guardian angel, to shield our household joys from ruin."

"A more generous service would be repaid with far less gratitude, Linda," replied Robert. "I bless God that, after having imbibed so many years of your young life, I have been able, if not to add to your happiness, to save one of its sources from danger. Were it not impious, I would repine that the wound were not deeper, that the blood had not flowed in a more exhausting stream."

"Speak not of the past, dear Robert," said Linda, inex-

pressibly touched by the profound melancholy of his tone. "I remember nothing but a love far, far beyond my deserts, most nobly renounced, and converted into the purest friendship and tenderest esteem. Never reproach *yourself* unless you would wound *me*; and do not, I pray you, Robert, speak so wearily of life,—you, with so much to endear it to your possession: such splendid endowments, such capacities for happiness, such means to be a blessing to others,—and religion, like a crown of glory, resting above all. Surely life should be to you a source of the purest gratitude, instead of weariness and discontent. There are thousands and tens of thousands of the sons of suffering, of oppression and want, who might envy Robert Graham the munificent gifts of nature and of fortune."

"I am wrong, Linda—I feel that I am," said Robert, rising and walking backward and forward the whole length of the room, as he was wont to do in moments of strong excitement. "What am I, that I should sigh for the wine of Cana, when my Saviour drank the wormwood and the gall? that I should pine after the home of love and joy, when He had not where to lay his head? Oh, Linda, it is not well for me to be here, when the distant fields of my Master are wearing the harvest-gold. At the post of duty my loins are girded with strength, and the Spirit of God breathes in burning words through these now murmuring lips. The Christian must not slumber in bowers of ease. Temptation was hidden in the roses of Paradise. It climbs not the mountain heights of toil."

"Listen to me, my brother," said Linda, in accents of sweet persuasion; and rising also, she linked her arm in his, as if what she had to utter must come as near his heart as possible. "You have devoted three of the brightest years of your life to the holiest service in which man ever engaged. When scarcely twenty years of age—only think how young—you took the cross upon your shoulder and the pilgrim's staff in your hand—leaving all, sacrificing all, in imitation of your

divine Master. You have shown your zeal and devotion. You have condensed the labours of a long life in a few short years. You could not bear such continual exertion. Health and life itself would yield ere long. You must not think of returning. Heaven has marked out a path for you in your own country and in the midst of your friends, in which you can confer as holy blessings, and offer up as acceptable sacrifice to God, as ever ascended from a Christian altar in a pagan land."

"Speak, Linda; and tell me whence and where this path leads."

"I will; but do you not think, Robert, that our heavenly Father, who set the solitary in families, blesses the domestic altar as well as the dedicated fane? If you were convinced that there was one pure, innocent heart clinging unconsciously to you for happiness, a heart enshrined in so frail a casket that a sudden wrench might shiver and destroy it—such as an entire separation from you—would you not think that heart a sacred deposit placed in your keeping, which it was your duty to watch over and cherish with lifelong care? You understand me, Robert; I know you do."

The colour mounted high in Robert's pallid cheek, as Linda fixed upon him her entreating eyes. He did not wish to understand; he could not deceive her.

"You mistake the expression of sisterly affection for a warmer feeling, Linda. I know to whom you allude; but, believe me, there is no bond between us, save that of disinterested friendship and Christian sympathy. She has accepted me as her adopted brother, and I love her as such, and nothing more."

"Nothing more, Robert? How can you be insensible to so much sweetness and sensibility? She loves you, Robert, as no sister ever loved a brother. A sister weeps at a brother's danger, but the pulsations of her heart do not stop as hers did this evening at the first glance of your bleeding wound.

The slightest word you address to her brings the warm tide to her snowy cheek, and the love-light to her soft, blue eye. Have you not seen—have you not felt this? I would not say this, fearing to infringe on the maiden delicacy of her feelings, but your apparent insensibility and her fragile health urged me to do it. I believe it is not only in your power to make her supremely happy, but to snatch her, by timely interposition, from a premature grave."

"Surely, Linda, you cannot mean what you say. How can my feeble hand avert the arrow of the Almighty, if directed to a human heart? Would you place me in the stead of Omnipotence, and make me answerable for its mysterious decrees?"

"No; but I would arouse you to a conviction of the power you really do possess; and urge you to use it, not as a despot, who recks not of the hearts that are crushed by his sceptre, but as the benefactor, who lives but to bless and to save. Oh, Robert, I thought I could be so eloquent on this subject that words would come at my bidding, of such pure, persuasive eloquence, you could not help but listen and be convinced. But I am weak, and a very bankrupt in speech. Yet hear me, my brother, for the pure cause I plead; hear me by the fraternal love you bear me, and which I so dearly prize; by the priceless worth of woman's spotless truth, and by the heaven of domestic happiness that may be yours; doom not this sweet young creature to the misery of unrequited affection. Nay, I know what I am saying; there is no exaggeration or romance in it. Her brother fears lest consumption mark her for its prey; but the malady is in her heart, physical malady, I mean. The sudden brilliant colour that flashes in her face, the quick, panting breath, the sudden tremor of her whole frame—these symptoms show that the citadel of life is attacked. How fatal is the effect of disappointment or sorrow when there is such a frail security against their wasting power!"

All the time Linda was thus earnestly, eloquently pleading, her arm was linked in Robert's, her face was upturned to his, beaming with enthusiasm and softened by sensibility. Robert was moved, agitated, startled. He did not like to believe the truths she uttered ; yet, even as she spoke, circumstances, unheeded before, rose to his remembrance and verified her words. He would sooner die than suffer Linda to suppose that he cherished one feeling for herself she would not sanction as the wife of Roland. He could not tell her that where one image was, another could not dwell ; neither could he be so untrue to himself, so false to Julia, as to make professions which he did not feel.

"I am not insensible," he answered, in a troubled voice, "to the loveliness and excellence of your friend ; but if it were true that I have excited so deep an interest in a guileless heart, would it not be an insult to its purity and truth to offer her the mere dregs of mine?—to take the wine and give the lees of affection ? Instead of securing her happiness, it would entail upon her unutterable misery."

"No, Robert; there are no lees in such a heart as yours. The wine and the oil are supplied by the same hand that filled the cruse of the widow and the net of the fisherman. They cannot, will not fail. She will not prize your love less because she may not be the object of its first youthful ardours. Few, few indeed, are so happy as to reign the unrivalled mistress of the heart ; and a second love is oftentimes stronger and deeper than the first. Circumstances have such a controlling influence on our destiny, that we scarcely know what we would be or do if left to ourselves. But that is not what I intended to say. Let Julia herself decide. Offer to her acceptance your esteem, tenderness, regard—all that she is worthy to inspire and you to feel—all that you can and must feel, if you yield yourself unreservedly to her influence—and see if she reject the offering."

Robert gently drew away his arm from Linda's, and,

sinking on the sofa, pressed his hand to his forehead. He looked excessively pale, and Linda, reproaching herself for forgetting the languor he must feel in the cause she had espoused, brought him a glass of water, and entreated him to forgive her if she had transgressed the limits of a sister's solicitude.

"I know I have no right to urge you," she said, tremulously, quite disheartened at the ill success of her self-appointed mission, "but I have been so sanguine, so hopeful; I saw such a bright light before me, and it seems so dark now. Poor Julia! better had she stayed in the land of snows than have come to find among our flowers something colder and more unmelting."

Linda was really vexed at Robert's insensibility. She had thought the knowledge that he was beloved by such a being as Julia, would be welcomed with rapture; that he would open his arms to receive her as a heaven-sent treasure, and shelter her from sorrow, sickness, and death itself. Linda was accustomed to find herself irresistible, now she pleaded in vain. She had compromised Julia's delicacy, and her own too, in proclaiming an unsolicited attachment, in the enthusiastic hope of a happy result, and she was doomed to disappointment. If Robert was determined to close his heart to domestic love and joy, to reject one whom her imagination clothed with the attributes of an angel, whose life she had represented as trembling on his will, why should she make herself wretched? She could not help it. She had supplicated, she had prayed; there was nothing left for her but to weep. That she would not do; it was too childish. So, turning away her head, she took some flowers from a vase that stood in the centre of the table, and, bending over them, the tears she resolved Robert should not see dropped upon the petals.

"Are those tears for me or for Julia?" asked Robert,

hastily rising and approaching her, stung to the soul by her last words.

"For both!" she answered; then added ingenuously, "for myself too! I feel very much as the spoiled child when its darling wish is refused gratification, or who, having erected a beautiful card castle, just as it gives the crowning touch, sees it demolished by a breath."

"You think me cold, selfish, and cruel, Linda—I see you do—and I cannot repel the charge. I am not ungrateful for the interest you feel in my happiness—heaven knows I am not! You have taken me so by surprise; my mind feels unsettled, bewildered! my head aches! my brain reels! The pillars of the lonely temple of my heart seem tottering, and I ready to be crushed beneath the ruins! I will think of it, Linda, not lightly, but deeply—prayerfully! I will lay the subject before God, in the stillness of the midnight hour, with humility and solemnity, on bended knee, and with devout and earnest spirit. You have placed upon me a fearful responsibility, and if I am made to believe that it justly rests on me, I promise you, my beloved sister, by my honour as a man, and my faith as a Christian, I *will* assume it, whatever be the sacrifice."

"Talk not of sacrifices," said Linda, unutterably affected by the gentle sadness of his concluding words, and feeling that his happiness had not its foundation in this world. "When I began this subject, I did not think of its involving such very painful interests. I fear I have been wrong. Forgive me if for one moment I thought you inexorable and cold. Forgive me for having dared to dictate in a matter of so much delicacy, so peculiarly your own. I shall never renew the subject, dear Robert; and whatever be your own views of it hereafter, let not the remembrance of this scene rise as an intercepting cloud between you and me."

She held out her hand with a smile of perfect reconciliation, and a glance that deprecated his displeasure. Robert

took the offered hand, pressed it a moment, then suddenly letting it fall, he walked to the door.

"Farewell, Linda!" he cried, pausing on the threshold, and looking back, lingeringly, as if on the eve of a long separation.

"Robert, where are you going?" exclaimed Linda, following him to the door. "Why do you say farewell in that strange, unnatural accent? Surely you are not going to leave me?"

"Did I say farewell?" cried he, forcing a smile. "I meant to have said good-night—that is all. I did not know I uttered so solemn a word. Good-night, Linda. Did I say it right this time?"

"Good-night, Robert. Stop a moment; you look sick. What shall I do for you before you go? Stay, if it be only for a glass of wine."

"No, I thank you, I need nothing."

"Is the bandage on your arm easy? Shall not Judy dress the wound again before you sleep?"

"Oh, no; I would forget it altogether were it not for this light fetter."

The scarf with which Linda had bound his arm now passed round his neck as a sling. Judy had brought him one of white linen, but he preferred that, he said, for it was lighter and more elastic.

"Well, if you will not let me do any thing for you, you had better go, for I am sure you need rest. I cannot forgive myself for having disturbed you so, after suffering too, and endangering yourself for me."

"No more, Linda, I pray you; good-night."

He repeated it again, as if to assure himself that he was master of his words, and retired to his chamber, but not to rest. The moment he was alone, he cast himself on his knees, and bowing his face on his right hand, gave vent to his imprisoned emotions. He had been exercising such mighty self-control, there was such a tension on the brain, such a girdle round the heart, it seemed as if they had not

loosened he must have died. Never had Linda seemed so unspeakably lovely, or so unconquerably loved, as when she pleaded so earnestly, so warmly for another. Never had he found it so hard to repress the wild waves that were surging up, and threatening to overflow the limits of prudence, honour, and religion. He felt so humiliated, so crushed by a knowledge of his own weakness—he who, a few months before, had thought himself so strong and self-relying. Where were his ministerial vows, his renunciation of the world, his devotion to heaven? Were his Saviour and his God dethroned for the human idol whose worship he had himself pronounced sacrilege and sin? Where was the spiritual strength that had sustained him in all the heat and burden of the days of missionary toil? Where was the angel of the roaring lion's den?—the guardian who, in the likeness of the Son of God, walked with the Hebrew children in the fiery furnace? They were not near, but the tempter was; and whispered in his ear, while Linda was entreating him to give his heart to another, that perchance the hand of destiny might liberate *her*, and he could then claim her, without guilt, as the purchase of his undying love. Ah yes! the tempter watched him, as the ancient warriors watched their foe, to find the only openings in their iron armour where the sword could penetrate. He did not promise him the kingdoms of this world, nor power, nor glory, nor dominion,—he would have spurned them as dust,—but he whispered to him, that if he kept himself unbound, the day might come when, by the decrees of Providence, she whom he had so long loved might yet be his. This was the only accessible place in the steel panoply of his integrity; but the moment he felt the arrow of temptation enter, he wrenched it forth, and hurled it from him, though the flesh quivered on its barbed point.

“My God!” he exclaimed, torn by remorse, and steeped in self-abasement, “my God! forsake me not; forsake me not in my extremity. I return to thee in the deep humility of a

broken and contrite spirit. Oh! Thou who wast strengthened by angels in thine hour of mortal agony, and who hast now ten thousand legions at thy command, send down one, even one! oh, my Saviour! to bear me up, and keep my feet from stumbling, as I tread the dark and narrow path. Methinks I hear thee, sacred Mourner, say: ‘Couldst thou not watch one hour while I went apart from thee?’ And thou, too, Holy Spirit, divine Comforter, thou whom I have grieved from my bosom, return and fold thy wings once more in thy deserted nest. The storm that rent the foliage which sheltered thee will be lulled, as soon as thy downy touch is felt.”

Prostrate on his knees, with his face buried in his hands, Robert lay, till the midnight hour rolled near, and the stars trembled through a chill, dewy atmosphere. Then he rose, and his footsteps muffled by the soft carpet on which they were pressed, he walked till he found himself silvered by the rising moon, whose waning face looked down reproachfully on his for disturbing the mystery of her beams.

Robert lived a century in that single night, counting hours by the dial of thought. As soon as he was sufficiently composed to reflect with calmness, he brought before him every argument Linda had urged in Julia’s cause, and weighed them in the balance of reason and conscience. He acquitted himself of all intention or thought of deluding her into a belief that he loved her otherwise than he professed to do; but her pale, sweet face haunted him, with its expression of dove-like innocence and profound sensibility. He saw it in the shadows that gathered in the room; he saw it in the moonlight that glimmered in the heavens; he saw it, too, looking up toward him from the depths of a new-made grave, and a voice seemed to issue from it, saying, “Oh, *cold* and hard of heart! Thy hand dug this clay-cold bed. Thine eyes beheld me fading in my early spring, and though one tear of pity might have revived my wilted bloom, thou hadst no tear for me. I came a young and tender blossom from my native clime,

and thou didst shine upon me like the tropic sun, with withering power. Like a flower of the field I have perished, and the places that once knew shall know me no more forever."

And then it seemed to him the wail of a broken heart was in his ears, and the rising breeze sighed with dirge-like sound, and the stars gleamed like funeral lamps on the sweeping pall of night.

And then the shadows rolled away, and a vision rose before him of domestic peace, if not joy, of a fireside sacred from intruding passions, where the world-weary spirit found some serene repose. That sweet, haunting face was there, wearing a smile of celestial happiness, and the cheek blooming with renovated roses. If solar warmth and splendour were wanting, the purity and tranquillity of moonlight reigned. If it was not the Eden for which he had panted, it was a bower of rest, such as the wayfaring pilgrim on the journey of life might welcome the more joyfully, that though it was sweet enough for earthly repose, he was not in danger of forgetting his heavenly home; and over that fireside was written in large, luminous characters, "Security from temptation, safeguard from sin, proof of the sincerity of repentance, the steadfastness of faith, holiness to the Lord, justice to men."

One by one the mystic characters came forth, and assumed the most startling distinctness, like letters traced on an electrical jar. Then they seemed to be gifted with sounding tongues, and chimed in his ear like the Christmas bells of a great cathedral; and again they appealed to another quickened sense, and swelled out beneath his imaginary touch, as the words do fashioned for the blind man's fingers. Then sight, hearing, and touch all united in a wild, inexplicable *melange*, and sleep rolled over him in a dark, heavy wave.

CHAPTER IX.

WE left Nora at the piano, and Henry standing by the music stool of the versatile mocking-bird, trying to make her finish one song before she began another. She had a wild, sweet voice, and a brilliant touch, and might have made a superb musician, could she have commanded patience enough to practise, and perseverance enough to execute all her genius grasped.

"Do finish that song, Nora," said Henry, "it is my favourite. My wife used to sing it to me at the twilight hour, and her voice was as soft as the stilly dews."

"Then you should not wish me to desecrate it," replied Nora, "and break the sweet charm of associations. It ought to be an air enshrined and holy, for no female lips to breathe."

"I never asked one to sing it but yourself, since the lips that endeared it have been silent. I would not ask another, Nora, for there does a holy charm rest upon it that renders it sacred to me."

Nora looked up in his face, struck by the peculiar tone of his voice; but she read something there that beat down her eyes, bright and saucy as they were. She could not at that moment jest lightly on any thing consecrated by sacred memories, and immediately commenced again the song he loved, and actually finished it, in soft and sweetly modulated tones. Henry listened with trembling eagerness, fearful lest the wild creature should break the spell by suddenly dashing into a different strain. He gazed upon her with intense admiration. The image of the fair young wife whose memory hallowed the song, faded before the living brightness of Nora's form. The truth was, the gay, brilliant, and capricious Southern girl had completely fascinated the Northern student. He had resolved to study her character more fully before he yielded his judgment

to the allurements of fancy, to discover if she really had a heart lying beneath the foam and sparkle of her words, but the spell of her witchery was too strong. He was no longer master of himself. Nora, whatever she was,—all foam and sparkle, or perchance the fountain's depth and clearness,—was his destiny.

"Thank you a thousand times," said he; "the strains will henceforth be doubly dear; they are consecrated by the two-fold charm of memory and hope."

"I do not like sad songs," said Nora; "they make me feel as if I *could* be wretched, and if I have the capacity, I do not wish to know it. This is more to my taste."

And she began one of the liveliest, merriest strains, smiling and nodding her head in accompaniment, now and then glancing at Henry her gipsy, black eyes.

"Do be serious a few moments, Nora," cried Henry, boldly arresting the jewelled fingers that flew over the keys; "it is not often we are alone, and I have that to say which cannot be breathed in another's presence. My heart is full; it must speak, and find a listener, too."

"Well!" exclaimed Nora, turning gravely round, and leaning her head on her hand, while her elbow rested on the piano, with the most demure expression imaginable; "I am all attention."

Poor Henry! if she had dashed a goblet of cold water in his face, he could not have been more disconcerted. Just as a most fervid declaration of love was trembling on his lips and flashing in his eyes,—just as he had imprisoned that perverse hand, and imagined its yielding softness responded to the pressure of his, to meet that face of mocking gravity and air of frigid attention, instead of the averted cheek and downcast eye that marks a lover's triumph,—it was outrageous, unendurable.

"Nora, you are enough to drive a man crazy!" cried he, dropping her hand, his face turning a crimson hue. "I never

saw a creature so wayward, so tantalizing, and, I fear, so heartless."

"Why, what have I done, sir? You asked my attention, and I gave it. I am sure I did. I thought I was behaving very prettily indeed. Well, if you don't choose to speak, I will finish my song."

"No, you shall not sing, nor play, nor mock me either with you elfin pranks; but you shall listen to me, as woman ought to listen to the man that loves her with a true and loyal heart. You shall listen, that I may know whether I am wasting my soul's treasures on one who heeds them not, or whether I am enshrining them in a golden casket, that I will wear in my bosom forever."

And Henry again took her unresisting hand, and leading her to a sofa, placed himself beside her, while he compelled her to listen to many eloquent and impassioned words. She listened till she seemed magnetized by the spell he threw around her. Her colour grew brighter and warmer,—rays of pleasure stole from her downcast eyes, and the quick, tremulous motion of the lace that shaded her bosom denoted the quickened pulsations of her heart. No art could have dissembled such rapture of attention, such passive acknowledgment of another's power.

"Speak, Nora!" exclaimed Henry, enchanted at an effect so much beyond his most sanguine hopes; "thou most beloved, as thou art most bewitching of human beings,—speak, and tell me that the warm heart, which now glows and speaks in every feature of your face, in every glance of your eye, is mine, and mine alone. Tell me this, and receive in return the gratitude and adoration of my whole life."

Henry, who was lifted to the third heaven on the wings of triumph, was about to commit some of the usual extravagances of young lovers, when Nora sprang up with the quickness of the antelope, and flew to the opposite side of the room.

"Mr. Bellenden, it is you who are crazy," she cried; "you

really cannot know what you are doing. You are too demonstrative; indeed, you are."

She shook back her wild ringlets, and tried to frown; but Henry saw the gleam of her pearly-white teeth, and knew the smile was there.

"This is not a moment for levity," said Henry, again approaching her; "the happiness of my future life hangs trembling on it, and so does yours, dear Nora. I know it—I feel it. Be true to yourself, and ingenuously acknowledge it. Yield that wild heart unreservedly to my safe and holy keeping. Give it nobly—give it generously: you never, never shall repent the gift."

"I have no heart—I have nothing to give," cried Nora, visibly agitated, and snatching away the hand which Henry had again taken; "I know nothing about love, and I don't wish to know; I am a thousand times happier as I am. I would not place my happiness in any man's keeping; no, though he came to me in the guise of an archangel. I like you as well as I do any one,—perhaps better; but never talk to me in this way again, if you have the least regard for my good opinion. I really thought you had more sense."

"And I thought you had more feeling," said Henry, vexed, tantalized, angry, yet still more fascinated than ever. "But if you like me better than any one, on that confession rise mountains of hope. If I have no rival, I must and will prevail, for every woman's heart was formed for love. Your lips deny my suit, Nora, but your eyes beam assent."

"If they do, they belie my heart," said Nora, her cheeks dyed with deepening crimson; "for, whether you believe me or not, I utter the words of truth and soberness. I never intend to marry, and you shall not call me a coquette. Sit down, if you please, and listen to me one moment, even as I have done to you. No, not in that chair,—the one farther off. Don't look angry; I don't wish to provoke, but convince. No one believes a young girl when she says she does not intend

to marry. They laugh, and shake the head, and exclaim,—‘Let her wait till she is asked.’ Now, I have been asked before, more than once; but I did not like the wooers, and it was very easy to say, Nay. I do like you, as well as I ever expect to like any one, and my resolution is still unshaken.”

“But, Nora”—

“Hush! I have the floor, and you must hear me through. The man who tried to govern me, I should hate; the man who allowed me to rule him, I should despise. The man who permitted me to have my own way, I could not respect, and, therefore, could not love,—and yet my own way I must have. I know it is a bad one—a daring, headstrong, *wild-coltish* way; but it is mine, and I cannot live without it.”

“But, Nora, listen one moment.”

“Hush, I say, Henry Bellenden. You believe me heartless; but had I less *heart*, I would be willing to marry. Had I less feeling, I would be willing to incur fond, believing woman’s almost certain doom—indifference, neglect, or alienation.”

“Good heavens!” exclaimed Henry, rising hastily from his chair; “what a libel on man!”

“Yes,” continued Nora, laughing at his excitement, yet disregarding the interruptions, “it is because I know that I could love so deeply, so passionately, that I will not love at all. Men are all tyrants—all Napoleons in their way: some wrap their sceptre in down, and twine it with flowers, but it is, nevertheless, the rod of empire, and wo to the wife who disputes its awful sway. No, Henry, I would rather ‘be a kitten and cry mew’ in the chimney-corner, than lead the humdrum, treadmill life half the married women in the world do.”

“Captain Lee and his Linda are signal proofs of the truth of your assertion,” cried Henry, sarcastically, wrought up to quite a feeling of vengeance for the wrongs of his sex.

“There is but one Linda in the universe, and Captain Lee is her counterpart. If I were Linda, I might rely on the constancy of men; but being nothing more nor less than what

I am, I dare not cast my maiden hopes on the hazard of a die."

"I could bring forward such proofs of man's constancy as to redeem the whole sex from your charge," said Henry, warmly; "man's heart is the rock, which neither wavering winds nor beating billows can move—woman's, the wave curling by the faintest breath of air."

"Is it *you* that boast of constancy, Henry, when not one hour ago you bade me sing a song hallowed by the memory of one to whom you once breathed vows as warm, nay, I doubt not, warmer than you have just now uttered to me! You talk of constancy! She should have purchased your immortal love, for she passed from you in all her fair bloom and beauty, before time had robbed her of one youthful charm; and yet you have suffered her image to be supplanted by such a mere flippategibbet as I am." She spoke with well-dissembled scorn, and her eye had a mocking gleam.

Henry started as if pierced by an unseen weapon. His face turned as pale as the linen collar below it, and his blue eye looked the colour of steel. Nora had gone too far, and she felt it,—felt it too late. She had roused the couchant lion, while she only thought to lay her hand lightly on his mane.

"And is this eruel taunt your only return for the outpouring of every bosom thought, the full confidence, the sacred trust I have reposed in you? But I deserve it for my weakness and delusion, deserve it for having placed an idol of stone on the altar where a saint was once worshipped."

He spoke in the low tones of suppressed emotion, then turned hastily and quitted the room; quitted it before the repenting Nora could open her lips to bid him stay.

She sat perfectly still a moment, listening for his return. He was not really as angry as he seemed. He would certainly come back and seek the reconciliation he must know she was willing to grant. But he came not. Five, ten, fifteen minutes passed; she counted them as she would dropping sands, by

the French clock over the mantelpiece,—counted them till she felt lonely and dreary, and wretchedly out of humour with herself. What evil spirit had instigated her lawless tongue to upbraid him for an attachment he had described in such beautiful harmony with the sentiments he still cherished for the dead? Why had she so cruelly trifled with a heart she had not fully appreciated till she deemed it forever lost?

She would have exclaimed with the tender Juliet,

“O for a falconer’s voice,
To lure this tassel gentle back again!”

But he was gone beyond recall; gone in pride and resentment, only too justly roused. Nora sat, with her hands clasped, listening, starting, resolving if Henry did return to make a charming apology, and be all that was gentle and amiable. But she “found no place for repentance” then, though earnestly and sorely she craved it.

“I did not wish to marry him. I never wish to marry any one,” said Nora to herself, trying to test the sincerity of her words; “but I did not mean to cast him from me as a friend. He is a charming companion, a noble-hearted fellow; oh, dear, what a matchless goose I am!”

Here Nora raised her hands to her face, and actually burst into tears. She had been trying to keep them back, but they would come,—come in a gush, free and warm as a summer shower, and soft and refreshing as the dews of evening.

What a pity Henry had not left his glove or handerchief, and returned at this propitious moment! What a pity he had not seen her in the sincerity of her penitence, the abandonment of her sorrow! But Nora was doomed to weep alone, and to wipe away her tears with her own handkerchief, and we are sorry to say that her heart grew hard as the tears ceased to flow.

“I will not be such a fool, such a baby, as to sit crying and sobbing here,” thought she, rising and shaking her handkerchief indignantly. “I don’t care, I’m sure; if he chooses to give me up so lightly, he’s welcome to do it. I am not going

down on my knees to his royal highness, entreating to be restored to his regal favour, not I. As quick as he is to resent, let him be slow to forgive. I ought not to have said what I did, but it is true—every word is true. After loving and being loved, by such a being as he describes her to have been, how can he transfer his affections to me; me, so wilful, so incorrigible, so little worthy of his love?"

When Nora retired to her chamber, she rejoiced that Julia slept, so as not to observe the traces of her unusual agitation. It was a strange thing for her to lie awake, listening to the breathings of another, but her eyes seemed propped open by some invisible hand. She tried to shut them, but they would fly wide open. Every thing looked so dim and ghostly by the glimmering starlight—even Julia's face on the white pillow, so still and deathlike in its serene repose—she did not like to glance around her. All at once she saw a star shining through the parting of the window curtains. It seemed to fix upon her its bright, resplendent eye, and speak to her of the mystery of its beams. It was the only one visible of all the host of heaven, through the parted drapery, and Nora's wandering thoughts steadied under its solitary brightness. It was a burning ray from the All-seeing, penetrating the seerets of her heart, and rebuking its folly. Oh! how long it had been shining; that little star, holding its silver lamp over the bosom of the sleepless, for the eye of God to read!

Perhaps Henry was gazing, too, on that very planet, and thinking how sweetly it shone on his wife's distant grave, and in how short a time, in the course of human events, it might be beaming on his own. For the first time in her life, Nora reflected deeply on the vanity of her own pursuits, and the wings of her spirit fluttered for a heavenly flight. She was sorry she was in the habit of sleeping so soundly when the stars were such glorious company. She would try to lie awake every night, and learn the sacred lore of the skies. In the midst of all this wisdom, she caught herself several times

wondering how Henry would look when he met her in the morning, and how he would address her, if he spoke to her at all.

He did speak to her very courteously, but very coldly, and she answered him in the same manner. The others were too much pre-occupied to observe any thing peculiar, so their estrangement was not noticed.

Robert looked so ill that Linda was alarmed, and insisted upon sending for a surgeon. Aunt Judy, when she examined his wounded arm, said that it was mightily inflamed, and that Tuscarora ought to attend to it, for he was wonderful in cures. Robert, who resisted Linda's entreaties that he would put himself under the care of a physician, willingly consented to Judy's proposition; and the Indian leech came, his simple medicines contained in the brilliantly wrought hunting-pouch, suspended from his neck.

Though Nora and Julia had visited his cabin, they had not seen Tuscarora. He was absent, and the gentle Naimuna, exalted into a heroine by her association with Linda's forest adventures, received them with the grace of civilization.

Nora, who had been unusually sober and silent the whole morning, kindled into rapture at the first glance of the Indian's stately figure, and Julia, though less demonstrative, gazed with equal interest on the noble Christian savage. We are glad to welcome thee once more, princely scion of a kingly race,—majestic specimen of the sons of the wilderness. The same serene gravity rests upon thy brow, the same melancholy sweetness softens thy firmly-closed lips, and the same slumbering power is felt in thy glittering eye.

"What a magnificent creature!" exclaimed Nora, quite audibly, as he entered the room,—his waist girdled by the many-coloured belt of wampum, and moccasins, wrought with brilliant porcupine quills, encasing his feet. Little Walton, the moment he beheld him, stretched out his arms with a cry of delight, and laid his soft cheek lovingly on his deer-skin

robe. Tuscarora loved the child of Linda with exceeding tenderness, and taxed his forest skill for the invention of playthings for the young eaglet, as he called the infant,—and nothing could be more attractive to the eye of childhood than the picturesque costume and gorgeous colours that still distinguished the Indian from his white brethren. It was not from a gaudy taste, but a respect for ancestral customs, that Tuscarora wore the dress of the aborigines in the midst of civilized life.

"Why is my young brother so pale, and why is his hand burning with fever?" asked he, walking directly to Robert, who reclined on a sofa, suffering more from his wounded arm than he had expressed to Linda. "And why is he bound like the oak when the forest vine ties itself round its branches?"

"The enemy whom I had defeated face to face, stole afterward on my footsteps, and shot like a coward at my back," answered Robert, "else he had not given me this wound."

He then gave a slight sketch of his yesterday's adventure, but Linda's grateful tongue supplied all that he omitted.

"The foe lurks in ambush, gallant Tuscarora," said Linda, (she always addressed him in figurative language, for she knew it pleased him,) "but the arm of the hunter is strong; it will guard us from danger while the master is away on the deep waters, and our friend is weak from the blood he has shed in our defence."

"Wo to the wolf that prowls near the home of my benefactors," cried the Indian, his eye glittering for a moment with vindictive fire; then his countenance resuming its expression of placid dignity, he added—

"Will my brother come with me, or will the young maidens leave him a while to the mysteries of the healing art?"

"Let him not go," said Linda; "we will retire, and you must exercise your best skill as an antidote to my imprudence. I treated him last night as if he were well and strong, and to-day he suffers from my thoughtlessness."

As Nora and Julia were passing out arm in arm, Tuscarora seemed much struck with the appearance of the latter. She had been seated in the shadow of the curtain, and she glided forth, to his forest eye, fair as the swan on a sunny wave.

"The maiden is from the land of snow," he observed, with a look of calm dignity. "Has my young brother brought her to the country of flowers to dwell? It is good."

"Yes!" answered Henry, coming forward and applying to himself words which evidently embarrassed Robert, and covered Julia's cheek with a conscious blush, "I brought her hither because our Northern winds are too cold, and our wintry snows too deep. You have never, I suppose, travelled toward the granite hills?"

"My fathers dwelt between the rivers of the North and the blue streams of the South," answered Tuscarora; "but the friend who gave me education brought me near the waves of the great gulf, and I have never since gone far from the sounding music of its surges. I love the woods and the waters. My white sister has built me a cabin near the mighty Mississippi, where I can hear the voice of the Great Spirit, and adore the God of Christians."

He turned a glance of affectionate gratitude to Linda, who lingered at the door to hear his musical language, which she said always reminded her of the autumn wind murmuring among her native pines.

"Great brother!" cried Nora, running back with her customary unexpectedness of motion; "you have not noticed me at all, and I belong, like you, to the wilderness. Do you not see that I am of kindred blood and spirit? Brother of the wigwam, I greet thee,—I long to smoke with thee the calumet of peace, and shoot the arrow from thy sounding bow."

"The quiver of Tuscarora is full of arrows, and the calumet hangs from his cabin wall," answered he, with imperturbable gravity; "we bid you welcome. You have the tongue of the mocking-bird and the foot of the antelope."

"And you,—you have the eye of the eagle and the step of the lion," cried Nora, enchanted with her new acquaintance.

"Fast speech agrees not with the feverish brain," said Tuscarora gravely, looking at Robert, who smiled at Nora's characteristic address.

"Dismissed with such a kingly grace!" exclaimed Nora, leaving the room, and making at the door the graceful salaam of the East. "I never saw any thing like it. Do you think he would give me lessons in archery, Linda? I am serious. I will certainly ask him."

"Oh, yes. Nothing would give him more pleasure. There is a beautiful bow he made for Walton, hanging in the hall, with a quiver bristling with arrows by it. Try your skill in the garden, and make a target of roses."

Nora, who was pleased as a child with novelty, sprang up and caught the bow and arrows, purloining at the same time Linda's gipsy hat,—and many a flower and leaf bore witness to her arrow's barb. She could not help hoping Henry would follow her, and give her an opportunity, not to apologize,—her pride forbade such a thought,—but to reinstate herself in his good opinion. She could see him through the wreathing vines, seated quietly within. She could see the lofty head of the Indian bent over the couch where Robert lay. Henry's assistance did not seem required. The seat he occupied commanded a full view of the garden and the charming archer, who was enacting the part of Diana with so much grace and spirit. But bewitching as Nora looked in the gipsy hat perched so carelessly on her wild ringlets, and whose rose-coloured riband sported with them so fantastically as she pursued with winged feet the flying arrow, Henry maintained his seat with the immovability of a judge, and Nora had to pick up her own arrows and select her own targets. She had been so accustomed to his attentions, he seemed always to have such an intuitive knowledge of her movements, which were the guide of his own,—that she felt as if a vital ligament were

severed, and a part of herself taken away. She did not realize her dependence on his companionship for enjoyment, till she was deprived of it, and, worst of all, by her own folly. She had not intended to wound his sensibility, she did not know what she did mean, but the wound was made, and the Indian leech had no balm to heal it.

Unwilling to remain in his sight, since he would not join her, she passed through the gate, shooting the arrow before her, then trying to overtake it. She shot it on one side and the other, making such devious traces it was difficult for her to find her way into the main path. As she was looking round, uncertain in which direction to turn, she perceived a man skulking in a thicket of trees skirting the river. He was too far from her to discern his features, but the red jacket, blue trousers, and long black hair corresponded with Robert's description of the child-robber, and her blood ran cold at the thought. It would not be quite so easy to carry her off as the infant, but there was no knowing but he might take a fancy to her, and she was not pleased with the idea. What was her joy when she beheld the wampum belt of Tuscarora gleaming through the foliage, giving her the consciousness of protection and safety. She ran to meet him, and laying her hand on his powerful arm, pointed to the figure that was receding from her view.

"The ruffian!" she whispered. "Do you not see him? There—there. He is gone."

The Indian's eye gleamed like burning coals, and he instinctively tightened his wampum girdle.

"I saw him—I saw him," he muttered through his shut teeth, "and I shall know him a thousand years hence—I will watch him the livelong day. Say nothing of this to the mother of the young eaglet, for the eye of the hunter is open—and she might tremble for naught."

"But you have no weapon, gallant savage," said Nora, "and the villain, you know, is armed."

"Lend me that bow and quiver till I reach my cabin," cried the Indian, taking the light instrument in his sinewy hand.

"But this is a child's plaything," said Nora, smiling; "what can my great brother do with this?"

"The sling of the shepherd boy was more powerful than the giant's spear," he replied; "you shall see what I can do."

Taking one of the slender arrows and fitting it to the airy bow, he raised it level with his eye and drew back the elastic string.

"The arrow shall pierce the summit of you leafless tree. It shall sever the frail splinter which the lightning bolt has left shivering there."

The arrow flew—flew to the summit of the blasted oak, and the tall splinter that cut the sky, like a broken knife, shivered and fell.

"Think you it would not make the heart-strings quiver, with an aim as sure as that?" asked the practised hunter, gratified at Nora's admiring glance.

"You must teach me to shoot, Nimrod of the woods, and I will furnish you with a hundred beaver skins, and the fur of twice as many bears and wolves."

"I go to search for the track of the bear or the wolf. The needle is lighter than the hunter's bow, and becometh better a young maiden's hand."

"Even the savage rebukes my wild and untamed spirit," mused Nora, as he strode away, with majestic steps that left no echo on the ear. "He has fashioned himself after the model of the white man, and of course lost much of his native majesty. I wish I were a real Indian squaw, free to wander all day in the forest, or to float in my bark canoe on the roaring stream. Then I should not always be offending the proprieties of life. I wish I were either one thing or another, not the nondescript thing I am, with the heart of a woman and the head of a wild-cat. The next book on Natural History

that appears, I expect to flourish in it, under the head of a new and distinct species."

Nora was quite subdued the remainder of the day, for there was a weight on her heart that robbed it of its specific levity. Julia was sad because Robert suffered. He had retired to his own apartment, in which aunt Judy occasionally went in and came out with consequential air. Linda was anxious too from the same cause, and in addition nervous apprehensions for her child made her start at the sound of a shutting door or an entering footstep. Never had she felt so depressed at the thought of Roland's absence, or so solicitous about his own safety. The sudden danger that had threatened her infant made her feel the insecurity of every blessing, and every link in the electric chain that passed round her heart participated in the shock.

Thus passed several days. The inflammation of Robert's arm, though yielding to the skill of his Indian leech, kept him a prisoner, or perhaps he secluded himself from choice; and Tuscarora said, "It was good: for quiet was the nurse of strength." He had told Nora, "that the wild beast kept at bay, but the hunter's eye was still open," and she obeyed his injunction of silence on the subject.

It was while Rosavilla was in this drooping state that it was enlivened by the appearance of Aristides Longwood, who went on his unspotted but eccentric career, just as he did three years ago. His home was in the house of Linda, but he radiated from it, coming back at will, sure of a joyous welcome. Sometimes he taught, several months at a time, a small school, similar to the one which gave him Linda for a pupil; but, he assured her, that as soon as Walton was old enough to profit by his instructions, he should devote himself exclusively to him. He had already made a phrenological chart of his head, as a guide in his plan of education.

CHAPTER X.

"AND is this very lively and charming young lady," said Aristides, gazing with a pleasant smile on Nora's blooming face, after having received her cordial greeting, "the little frolicsome child"—

"Who dared to steal behind your desk, and drop chestnut burrs in your classical locks, and commit a thousand other audacities, which I trust you have forgotten," interrupted Nora, "and forgiven too."

"'Tis easier for the generous to forgive 'than for offence to ask it,' as Thomson sensibly remarks," replied Aristides; "but I fear, *puella formosa*, if we recur to the days that are past, I shall suffer more than yourself. Methinks your memory might address the quondam pedagogue:

'I'll have thee, as our rare monsters are,
Painted upon a pole, and underwrit,
Here may you see the tyrant,'—

As Shakspeare pointedly affirms."

"Oh! no, Mr. Longwood, I am inexpressibly grateful for every tap of the ruler on my rebellious brains. I have no doubt it stinted the growth of many a noxious weed. So deep was my reverence of your wisdom, 'that even in your chidings I found grace and favour,' as Desdemona pathetically observes."

Linda, though she could not help smiling at the inimitable humour of her manner, looked anxiously at Aristides, fearing he might be displeased, meek and gentle as he was; but he smiled benignantly on the merry maiden, whose spirits rebounded from the weight that had oppressed them with the elasticity of whalebone.

"How young you look, Mr. Aristides!" she said, in quite a glow of sincerity; "I never saw any one so greatly improved. You must have discovered the fountain of perpetual youth."

"Nay, maiden of the pleasant tongue, I feel the time approaching when the 'wheel may be broken at the cistern,' as Solomon warningly utters. I am no longer young, and 'age is dark and unlovely,' as Ossian most sadly remarks. But time, though it may sprinkle with frost the once brown hair, and darken the windows of sight, cannot touch with hoariness the youth of the soul. 'Its snow cannot fall on the bloom of the heart,' as an anonymous poet sweetly has sung."

The delicate and spiritual loveliness of Julia attracted his poetic gaze. His imagination, ever on the wing for beautiful similitudes, compared her to all that is fair and fleeting; and as he, in his transparent simplicity, usually laid bare his thoughts, he addressed her in strains of the tenderest admiration:—

"Thou reminst me, oh, virgo purissima! of the lily of the field, to which our Saviour so touchingly alludes—of the snow-flakes of your northern clime: for they tell me you were born, like me, under the shadow of the Granite Hills. May the soft gales of the South blow gently on thee, *filia formosa*;" then, forgetting that he was addressing her, he added, in an unconscious soliloquy:

"The bloom of opening flowers, unsullied beauty,
Softness, and sweetest innocence she wears,
And looks like nature in the world's first spring,"—

as Rowe has charmingly expressed."

At this moment the nurse introduced the little Walton, much to the relief of Julia, who knew not how to reply to this remarkable burst of admiration. She had none of the chain-lightning of wit and merriment that flashed so dazzlingly yet harmlessly from Nora's lips.

The love which Aristides bore the child was affecting to

witness. It possessed all the purity and tenderness which characterized his affection for Linda, blended with a worship as deep as that which moved the Eastern magi to bring their costly offerings to the Babe of the manger. He looked upon it as the manifestation of ideal innocence and beauty—as the infant incarnation of all the beatitudes. It was his chief delight to cradle it in his arms while it slept, and watch for hours its tranquil slumbers. He would bend over it with the most intense delight, press with the softest touch its velvet cheek, inhale its pure, fragrant breath, then, lifting his deeply-set gray eyes to heaven, in silent prayer, twinkle away the starting tear, and draw the little innocent closer to his loving heart. No words could speak his horror and indignation when Linda told him of the attempted robbery of the child.

"Oh! *vulpa condelissima!*!" he exclaimed, raising his trembling hands, "oh! *agnus dei*, guard this little lamb: 'of such is the kingdom of heaven,' Thy own blessed lips have sweetly declared. But fear not, *filia beata*," turning to Linda, with unutterable tenderness and solemnity, "'He will give his angels charge concerning thee,' and thine also, for thou art of the household of faith."

The arrival of the simple-hearted, the learned, the eccentric Aristides was well-timed, and brought back the sunshine which was for a while obscured. Robert was pronounced convalescent by his Indian physician, and the freedom of the house restored to him. Henry, who was enchanted with Aristides, threw off the unnatural coldness which had chilled for a while his genial manners; and Nora was herself again. They had neither of them sought a reconciliation, but they were apparently friends. Henry was incapable of cherishing vindictive feelings against any one; and he forgave Nora for the wantonness which had so deeply wounded, but he resolved never again to expose himself to a similar bosom-stab. If nature had denied her a heart, perhaps she was not to blame. He had seen people trample on flowers, and wonder to see

them fade. *They* would not have felt so light a tread. Why should flowers have more sensibility than themselves? Nora crushed the blossoms of his heart as unthinkingly. She probably judged him by herself. Because *she* could not feel, she doubted the existence of sensibility; like the king of Siam who disbelieved the formation of ice, because his southern majesty had never beheld the phenomena of colder climes. It was foolish in him to be angry. He and Nora might be very good friends; she was certainly an amusing companion; but heaven forbid he should ever think of her again in a nearer and dearer association! So he laughed and talked with her as usual, and thought himself disenchanted. He could have *out-Solomoned* Solomon himself in his estimate of woman's *vanity of vanities*.

Linda was true to the promise she had given Robert, never to renew the persuasion which had so agitated and distressed him. But she could not help watching with painful solicitude his intercourse with Julia, to see if the day-spring of love were not dawning on its coldness. But while she observed with gratitude and joy an apparently growing interest in Julia, she felt as if he were estranged from her. She could not define in what the difference consisted; but he was not the same. His words were as kind and gentle, but they seemed cold to her warm, sisterly heart. Assured that Robert loved her as a fond brother loves, she thought not of repressing her own pure affection, and, now it was exalted by gratitude, it assumed a deeper, holier character. When he was ill and feverish, she would sit down by him, and bathe his hot brow and burning hands with the most tender assiduity; but he shrunk so nervously from the gentle appliance, thanking her, yet entreating her to leave him, that, convinced her attentions were oppressive, she transferred to others the ministrations she would gladly have rendered. And now he was with them once more, with no traces of his illness but the light sling in which his arm was suspended, and which constantly

reminded her of her debt of gratitude, her spirit hovered round him with watching solicitude, grieved at the inexplicable something that repelled its advances. She wanted him to love Julia, but not to deprive her of the regard which she prized next to Roland's wedded love. Oh! had she seen him that night, when, prostrate before his God, with bitter tears and agonizing throes he prayed for strength to subdue his unconquerable love! Had she seen him wrestling with the powers of darkness, with weapons drawn from heaven's armory, till heart and flesh failed, and unseen angels came and ministered to him! But though the night storm may call up the mountain billows of the deep till they dash against the skies, and sprinkle them with wrathful foam, they may smile with glassy smoothness in the morning sunbeams. The surface is calm—and men talk of the unruffled sea. Linda saw not the traces of warfare on Robert's marble brow. The peace of heaven seemed resting there.

Imperceptibly a shade gathered over the affectionate familiarity of her manners. She often refrained from calling him "dear Robert," when her heart glowed on her lips, because his glance came to her like the rays of a distant star. She did not take his hand, as she had formerly done, when she greeted him in the morning, or bade him the evening adieu. Thus she unconsciously assisted him in the sacrifice he had resolved to make.

Julia, in the mean time, was the companion of many an hour of social intercourse from which Linda purposely withdrew herself. He read aloud, and Julia was never weary of listening to his deep-toned, musical voice. Genius borrowed new inspiration from the medium through which it reached her heart. She could listen forever to his reading; yet when he talked, she wondered that she ever cared to hear the sentiments of others. She had never, never felt so happy. She lived in the present. No matter what the future might be, there was a blissful *now*. Robert thought of *her*—watched for her com-

fort—exerted himself to interest her—sought the seat at her side, and gave her his arm, in walking among the evergreen shades. Every one said, “How much better she looked! what a brilliant colour every evening kindled up her cheek! what deepening radiance in her heavenly blue eyes! When they told her this she smiled, and put her hand on her heart. It was an involuntary motion. It might express pleasure or pain. It might be the last, from the very excess of the first.

“I do not like that bright colour on her cheek,” Aristides would say, his eyes softening with prophetic sadness; “it always comes just before the sunset fades, as if she had caught the burning rays; I fear the life is leaving her heart that glows so brilliantly there—‘Early bright, transient, chaste as morning dew,’ as Young beautifully observes. The damsel is modest, and fair to look upon; but the rose blushes the sweetest when the canker-worm is gnawing in the calyx.

“‘That same flower which blooms to-day,
To-morrow may be dying;’

as Herrick tenderly expresses.”

One evening,—and it happened to be a dark and stormy one,—Julia was left alone with Robert. This beautiful clime is not exempt from clouds and tempests, and they come with a suddenness and power unknown in colder latitudes. Linda retired to her own room, unable to call the smile to her lip, when every stormy gust that swept by the window reminded her that Roland might be tossing on the billowy main. She had not heard from him since his departure from New Orleans, in the Eagle, bound for Liverpool. There had not been time for communication, unless through some meeting vessel; but still her heart craved for tidings of his safety with importunate solicitude. When these yearnings were strongest she loved to be alone, that she might think exclusively of her absent husband, or, with her child clasped to her bosom, talk to it of the

father, whose brave, protecting spirit seemed ever hovering round them.

Nora attempted to drown the voice of the storm-king in the gay notes of the piano, to which she actually led the patient Aristides, telling him that she could not sing without the inspiration of his presence,—and Henry followed, saying he would not be separated from him. There was quite a merry trio round the instrument, for, in the interludes of music, Nora vied with Aristides in the number and brilliancy of his quotations; and Henry, in whose mind the flowers of classic taste had been bountifully nurtured by Castalian dews, scattered them profusely at the social banquet.

Let us glance into the three rooms in which our friends are seated, each illumined by a magnificent light-wood blaze.

Let us paint them in separate pictures. Linda sits in a low rocking-chair at the fireside, with the sleeping Walton cradled in her arms. The night is cool, and a sky-blue cashmere dressing-gown, faced with down, is thrown loosely round her. The flowing sleeves are turned slightly back at the wrists, partially revealing an arm fair and symmetrical as the Grecian slave's. It is also open at the throat, and the cygnet's white and graceful neck is not more faultlessly beautiful than Linda's, round which her locks, glistening in the fire-glow, are carelessly straying. She bends down over her slumbering infant. She presses sweet kisses on its cherub lips, and blesses it in the name of its absent father. She starts as the wind rushes by on sounding wing, and looking wistfully through the curtains at the drifting clouds, prays the God of the ocean to guard from danger the bark of the mariner. Now and then a bright, warm tear falls on the rosy cheek of Walton,—a tear so pure that angels might kiss it away.

Oh, lovely young wife and tender mother! we love to linger on so fair a picture. If our eyes were anointed as the ancient prophets were, we have no doubt we should see a garland of celestial spirits twining round thee, with snow-white,

glory-tinted wings, for the kingdom of heaven is in thy heart, and surely “ liveried angels lacquey thee.”

How different the scene of which Nora is the central figure. True daughter of earth, she personifies its blooming joys and sparkling pleasures, in her fresh elastic form and mirth-exciting countenance. Every thing about her is in keeping with the individuality of her character. The crimson adornments of her dress, and the crimson japonica glowing in the blackness of her hair, seems as much a part of herself, as the jetty lustre of her eyes, and the electric brightness of her smile. How admirably the dark-grey garments of Aristides, his dark-grey eyes, and thin, decided features relieve this warm, brilliant figure, and place it in bold, yet charming relief! and Henry's fair, intellectual face, light locks, and eyes beaming with Attic fire, set off the picture like a frame of burnished gold.

There is one more to look at. It is like turning from a gorgeous painting to a soft, rich mezzotinto. Every thing has a subdued tint. The hearth-light has softened into harmony with the moonlight lustre of the lamps. The outlines of Julia's slender form meet in the soft, undecided, cloudy hue of the dress she wears. She is seated so that a shadow falls upon her, quenching the golden gleams of her hair, and leaving a mellow, brownish shade in harmony with the pensive beauty of her face. All the light seems to have gathered round the brow of Robert, who sits near the lamp with a book in his hand, from which he has been reading. It quivers in a halo above his dark hair, and flows in silver rills along a figure which might vie in symmetry with the Delphic gods. The book hangs listlessly in one hand, his forehead is pressed on the other. He hears the wind sighing through the tall magnolias. Julia hears only the sigh which involuntarily heaves the bosom of Robert. He lays down the book, and takes the seat vacant at her side. Ever since the evening when Linda pleaded with him so earnestly in Julia's behalf, he had been arming himself

with resolution to meet this moment, yet he trembled when it was near.

"Julia," said he, in a low and distinct voice, "you know the history of this passionate, yet I trust regenerated heart. You know the hopes which were blighted, the love which, finding no home in another's bosom, was driven back to my own. Your friendship and sympathy have been balm to the anguish of a crushed and wounded spirit. I prize it more than I have words to tell."

He paused, for his voice trembled from increasing emotion. Julia pressed her hand on her heart, to still its wildly-tumultuous beatings. All day she had felt a strange oppression there, as if a girdle were tightening round her. Now she wanted room to breathe, to feel. She panted, and a burning rose suddenly bloomed on her cheeks.

"Do not let me agitate you thus," continued he, pained by the excess of her agitation, for it made it more difficult to master his own. "We have knelt beside each other, my soul's sister, at the altar of our Saviour, and let the remembrance of that hour hallow the emotions of this."

He took her hand with tenderness and solemnity, and his voice became steadier, and his purpose strengthened, as he felt its quick, throbbing pulses, its gentle, relying touch.

"I will not deceive you, Julia. I could not, to secure my soul's salvation, bring to your spotless purity, your guileless simplicity, a false and hollow offering. The freshness and bloom of my heart is gone. Yours is in all its dewy spring-time. It is worthy the first and warmest affections, not the faded relics of an unvalued love. Yes, Julia, you are lovely and pure as an angel, and had I met you in an earlier hour, I might have loved you as you merit to be loved; but now"—

The hand he held grew suddenly as cold as snow, but he clasped it with a firmer pressure, and his words, which had fallen with a measured cadence, came with rushing eloquence from his lips.

"Now, even while I tell you that if she, the beloved of my youth, were free, I could feel for her all the wild passion that once desolated her life, and nearly destroyed my own; when I tell you, that under this very roof I have passed through struggles and conflicts in which I called on the principalities and powers of heaven to save me, if you will trust your happiness in the keeping of one so sorely tempted, yet so divinely strengthened, I promise to watch over it with as undying care as I would guard from extinction the flame of the vestal temple, were I a heathen devotee. No! I will not go to a profane source for inspiration. I will protect it as I would my Christian faith from the hands of sacrilege. I will cherish it in life as my most sacred trust, and in death consign it with my last prayer to the guardianship of our Father and our God."

She did not speak, but she looked up to him, as the worshipper looks to the image of the saint he adores. Words could not express the thousand varying, yet blending feelings that throbbed in her bosom, and burned upon her cheek. Had Robert told her that he loved her as he had loved Linda, she might have bowed beneath the burden of too mighty a joy; but the manner in which he offered to become the guardian of her happiness was so solemn, so sad even, that ecstasy was chastened into awe. She tried to speak, but the words trembled unuttered on her quivering lips. She could only press his hand in silence, in token that he had not poured out his soul into ears of stone.

"Think not, presumptuous as I am," he added, with a deep relieving sigh, a feeling of gratitude and triumph, a conscious liberation from the tempter's power, "that it is your happiness alone I consult, in asking for a charge so dear. Even now, I feel your saving influence. Once assured that you lean on me, frail and tottering pillar as I am, for support, I shall grow strong, that I may sustain your weakness,—and firm that the garland which entwines me may not fall with me in the dust. I do not ask you to be my wife, Julia, with the ardour of

youth's early passion. God knows I cannot do it; but I ask you to be my companion in the pilgrimage of life, my guardian angel from temptation and sin, my fellow-labourer in the cause of religion and humanity, the bride as well as sister of my soul."

Borne down by the intensity and weight of his emotions, Robert bowed his forehead on the hand he now clasped in both his own. It was not so much as a wooing lover he bowed himself thus, as the man humbled before his Maker and his God.

"Oh, Robert," said Julia, her countenance lighted up with celestial joy, that shone like April sunbeams, through gathering tears, "Oh, Robert, I am not worthy such an office; but I would rather walk hand in hand with you, in life's thorniest, most rugged path, filling *any* place in your true and noble heart, than reign unrivalled queen of any other, and dwell in Eden's bowers."

As Robert listened to this meek, unqualified expression of the most devoted, self-annihilating love, this lavish return for his poor, stinted offering, he felt there was something sublime and elevating in being the object of such a generous worship. He was not the ingrate that could hear it unmoved. He clasped her to his bosom, with fervent gratitude, and vowed to consecrate his future life, next to his God, to her. Perhaps Julia tasted in this moment the purest happiness that ever glowed in the heart of woman,—it was so purified from all earthly alloy—so hallowed by their mutual hopes of heaven. Since she had knelt at the altar with him in the rural church, and the incense of his prayers had borne her up to heaven, she had felt united to him by indissoluble ties. She was reconciled to the thought of an early death, that she might await his coming in a world of everlasting communion. She dreamed not of being his companion on earth, but she might hope to be his fellow angel in heaven, where there is "neither marrying nor giving in marriage."

Now she seemed to receive anew the gift of life. The tight, metallic band that girdled her heart was loosened, and downy folds of heavenly joy enwrapped it. The shadow of an early doom rolled away before the rising sun of love. She was not destined to die so young, when such rare felicity awaited her on earth. God was too lovingly kind, too tenderly merciful, to raise her to such a summit of hope, and then plunge her into the darkness of the tomb: that refuge of the miserable, that goal of the weary of life.

"Young as I am," she said, when the bewildering excitement of her feelings had subsided, "I have for years looked forward to the hour when the star of my life would set behind the night-clouds of death. Now it beams like a dayspring from on high. Oh, Robert, I feel that I shall live to fulfil the holy mission you have given me. If I may not be your helper and companion in labour, I can follow like Ruth the steps of the reapers, and gather the grain that falls from the golden sheaves. Let me find favour in thy sight, and the blessing of God will follow."

Julia spoke with enthusiasm. The manner in which Robert had addressed her was so different from that by which youth and beauty are usually wooed and won, that their anticipated union on earth seemed only a type of their divine espousals. When she retired that night, she was too happy for sleep. She seemed walking in a blissful dream. The voice of Nora sounded strange and harsh, compared with the soft echoes still lingering in her ears. Even the lamp-light looked dim to the remembered rays of Robert's dark-beaming eyes. If Linda were only near her, she would pour into her heart the overflowing tide of her emotions, for she would sympathize with her, and sympathy in joy is sweeter even than in sorrow. She sat up after Nora slept, wondering if Linda were awake and would suffer her to intrude on her retirement. Her room was near, and yielding to an irresistible impulse, she wrapped

herself in a dressing-gown, and, gliding through the hall, tapped lightly at Linda's door.

A gentle voice bade her enter. Linda was sitting as we have described her; but Walton slumbered in the crib, and she was intent on the pages of a book on which genius had breathed its wizard spell. She looked up with surprise, while a smile of welcome illumined her countenance.

Julia stood a moment, as if hesitating to speak her errand, then hurrying forward, she knelt on the footstool at Linda's feet, and throwing her arms round her neck, exclaimed with a burst of tears—

“Oh! I am so happy, so happy!”

“And Robert is happy too!” cried Linda, tenderly embracing her. “I understand it all. And I—I could weep with joy likewise, sweet Julia. My fondest prayer is answered.”

She had heard low and earnest voices in the next room the whole evening. She knew that Robert and Julia were there alone, and that the crisis of their destiny was near. And when Julia opened her door, with such a radiant expression of happiness glorifying her face, even through the soft mist of bashfulness that veiled it, she knew all which Julia came to tell.

“Robert has asked me to be his wife,” she murmured. “He has told me all. I know that I occupy but the second place in his heart. I am content. I have not capacity for greater happiness. I tremble now at its wild excess.”

“Believe me, sweetest Julia,” said Linda, folding her more closely in her arms, “whatever may have been his boyish feelings, they can never come between you and your wedded felicity. If Robert has asked you to be his wife, he has done it with the solemn purpose of devoting himself exclusively to you, heart, soul, and life. He will love you more and more, to the exclusion of every memory that is not associated with you. He will bless heaven with every morning sunbeam and every evening shade, for having wafted hither the Northern

flower to shed its fragrance on his Southern home. Oh ! you will both be happy,—and your happiness will not be the sport of every wind and wave, for it is founded upon a rock,—not built upon sand. Oh, Julia, it is a blessed thing to be the wife of a Christian—a Christian even in the private walks of life,—how much greater honour to be the wife of a Christian minister—a Christian missionary ! Were I not the happiest of wives, I could almost envy you such a glorious privilege."

"Ah ! I am so unworthy to enjoy it."

"Depreciate not your own excellencies. Had Robert searched the wide world over, he could not have found one more set apart and holy for the office than your too humble and lowly self. Your parents will surely sanction the union, for in a worldly point of view it offers every advantage of wealth and position."

"They are not worldly," she answered ; "I am confident they will consult my happiness alone. My brother loves him. I see no obstacle. Dearest Linda, teach me to be grateful, as I ought."

And thus they sat, their arms around each other, their hearts more and more closely drawn together, till the hour of midnight sounded and warned them to retire.

CHAPTER XI.

THE next morning no traces of the storm were seen, save the rain-drops that glittered on the foliage, and here and there a light branch lying on the ground, or a vine-wreath loosened from the frame it entwined. Henry, to whom Robert the night before had told his plighted faith to Julia, rejoiced at this consummation of his cherished wishes. He had lately had some secret misgivings. Now, he wondered he had even doubted Julia's

power to win and wear a heart which he believed entirely her own.

"Is this little flutterer at rest now?" he asked, laying his hand on her heart. "It has found a home—has it not?"

Even as he spoke, Julia felt a sharp pain, an indescribable anguish there, followed by a deadly sickness, and she shrank back with a low cry.

"What is the matter?" he cried, alarmed at her excessive paleness. "Surely that gentle touch has not hurt you!"

"Oh no," she said, leaning her head on his shoulder. "It is over now. A transient spasm,—that is all."

"But that is a great deal, Julia. If you are subject to them, they must be attended to. I will send for a physician at once. Such things must not be trifled with."

"I feel better now, dear Henry. I do not think a physician would do me any good. I am sure I need no medicine. My best physician is here."

The sudden glow on her cheek at the entrance of Robert told what physician she meant.

"Julia is not well, Robert," said Henry; "I insist upon placing her in the doctor's hands."

"Not well!" repeated Robert, looking at her brilliant colour. Julia smiled, and the smile deepened the illusion.

"If you had seen her a few moments ago," continued Henry, "you would not have recognised her."

"You know I was always subject to fainting-fits, brother. A physician could not change my constitution. But I am getting strong and well now. See, is not this the glow of health?" and, taking one of Henry's hands, she pressed it playfully against the warm roses of her cheeks.

Robert could not associate the idea of sickness with her present bright and smiling aspect. She had never looked so well. The love which she had so long hidden in her heart came up from its innermost shrine, and sparkled with electric brightness on her face. The soft cloud of languor that often rested upon

it was dispersed, and Robert wondered as he gazed at the exceeding brilliancy of her beauty. It is not strange that he thought Henry's fears were groundless, or that Henry, assured by Julia's repeated assertion that she now felt perfectly well, better than ever she had done in her life, should yield his judgment at last, and believe that he was foolishly apprehensive.

Once again in the course of the day, Julia felt the same indescribable anguish at her heart, followed by the same deadly faintness, and a cold dew came out on her forehead. Was it the dew of the night of death? She was alone in her room. Had Robert seen her at that moment, he would not have breathed till he had summoned a physician,—but the anguish passed and the faintness passed; and wiping off the chill drops of perspiration, she seemed to emerge from darkness into light. She rose and ministered to herself. Linda had prepared her a soothing mixture, which she kept in her own room, and she immediately felt its renovating influence. She would not speak of it, since it had vanished of itself. There was no need of exciting unnecessary alarm. If she continued to have such strange attacks, she would be willing to receive medical counsel and aid,—but not to-day. To-morrow it might not be needed.

She was right. It was not needed on the morrow.

That evening they all gathered in one room, and every soul seemed tuned in concert. There were no prima donnas present; but the three young females were gifted with sweet and cultivated voices, and Robert and Henry both sang, if not artistically, with great taste and feeling. Aristides was passionately fond of music. He would sit, with his chin propped upon his hand, his eyes half closed, his ear inclined to a gentle angle, apparently involved in a blissful reverie—

“‘Music, oh! how faint, how weak,
Language fades before thy spell’—

as Mr. Longwood melodiously observes,” cried Nora, keeping time to Linda's charming notes.

"I only borrowed the words of the poet, oh, virgo hilaria!" answered Aristides; "but they speak the language of my soul—

"The man who has no music in his soul,
Is fit for treason, stratagem, and spoils"—

as Shakspeare emphatically declares."

"Oh, Mr. Longwood, I should not think a gentleman of your exquisite originality would quote so hackneyed a phrase. It would do for me, who have so slender a stock of ideas, as I myself pertinently remark."

"Thou hast a pleasant wit, damsel, and I love the merry glance of thine eye. But the words of Shakspeare can never grow old by usage. They are the oracles of nature, and will forever breathe its spirit. The same stars shine night after night, and they still shine in everlasting youth. Like their great Maker, they know neither variableness nor change. But thou art young, and fond of novelty,—

"Variam et mutabile semper
Fæmina"—

as Virgil pointedly hath sung."

While Aristides and Nora thus cut each other with diamond words, a trio was clustered near the piano, and Linda, who had for the first time persuaded Julia to take the music-seat, held up her hand, with a smile, imposing silence on one who seldom owned its spell. Julia scarcely ever sang, except when alone. An unconquerable diffidence sealed her lips, and palmed her fairy fingers. Now, when Robert asked to sing, she obeyed, as if under the influence of an enchanter's wand, and Henry marvelled from what secret fountain the rills of melody came gushing forth. She chose her mother's favourite—

"Hark! he cometh, softly stealing."

It was a simple, pathetic air, and the touching words harmonized well with the soft and thrilling strains. Every note she

breathed her voice swelled clearer and sweeter; and when she had lingered on the last till it died away almost imperceptibly on the ear, the sound of a falling feather might almost have been heard in the deep stillness of the room.

This sudden and unexpected gush of harmony seemed like inspiration.

"Why, Julia! what has inspired you to-night? If it were the last song you ever expected to sing, you could not have thrown more soul and feeling into it," exclaimed Henry; "I never heard you sing like that before."

"The last song, Henry!" repeated she, looking up with an expression, which those around her never forgot; "the last! that is such a sad word."

There were other songs and blither strains, but Julia sang no more. At the close of the evening she was left alone with Robert. It was only for a few moments, for he urged her to retire, observing a languor in her eyes that indicated the need of rest. As he accompanied her to the door, and bade her good-night, she involuntarily paused, and her hand lingered in the clasp of his.

"Shall I see you in the morning?" she asked, looking wistfully in his face.

"I trust so, dear Julia. We know not what a night may bring forth; but, relying on God's love, we may hope the morrow's sunbeams will unite us once more."

"But is not this all a dream? and shall I not, on awaking, find it so?" said she, still lingering. "Oh, Robert, last night I felt as if immortality were begun on earth; now, nothing seems so fleeting, so unreal as my own existence. Do not smile at my weakness, but I fear to lose my hold of your hand, lest you vanish, and I behold your face no more."

"You feel the nervous depression always following too great excitement," he answered; and, putting his arm round her, he walked with her to the end of the passage which led

to her room. "Every thing will seem real to-morrow. The shadows will all pass away, and the peace of Heaven dawn on your soul."

He bent down, in the attitude of benediction, and kissed her brow.

"Angels guard, and our heavenly Father bless you, Julia," and gently drawing away his hand from her trembling clasp, he turned and left her. His own room was on the opposite side of the passage. As he entered it, he looked back, and saw Julia standing on the threshold, as if arrested there by magnetism. Her face was toward him, and the brilliant chandelier that lighted the hall threw its dazzling rays in a diadem round her head. She seemed enveloped in a glory, like a pictured saint; and when she disappeared from his gaze, Robert felt as if a visionary, and not an earthly form had vanished.

"Oh, Julia," thought he, "I may not love thee with earthly passion; but thou art worthy of a heavenly love. I will bind thee to my heart, as a shield from temptation and guilt, and thou shalt infuse thine own gentle warmth and purity into its haunted cells. And if ever I cease to guard thee faithfully, and cherish thee tenderly, pure and loving spirit, may the doors of my Father's mansion be closed against me."

Soon every sound was hushed, and darkness as well as silence rested on the household. The night waned away, and those who slept were unconscious that an unbidden guest had entered,—for his footsteps left no echo, so softly, so stealthily he came, so quickly and silently he fulfilled his terrible mission.

When Nora awoke, the morning beams glittered through the curtains, which were left in their daily folds the evening before. She released them from the gilded hand that restrained the sweeping drapery, suffering it to fall to the floor that Julia's slumbers might not be disturbed by the full glare of light. Her face was turned toward the wall, so that Nora

did not see it; but she lay so still, so tranquil, that Nora imagined her sleep must be as sweet as it was deep.

"I will let her have her nap out," said she to herself, "while I run about in the garden and whet the edge of appetite, as Aristides would sapiently say."

Nora was no loiterer at the toilet. She donned her garments with the light fingers of a Cinderella, and her hair always seemed to arrange itself, as the comb passed through its waving length. As with her usual skipping step, she went to the door and swung it hastily open, her eyes caught a glimpse of Julia's face, and she stood a moment, as if transfixed, then uttered a shriek so wild and piercing, it rang through the lofty hall, waking a thousand echoes. Robert, who was just leaving his room, which, as we have said, was on the opposite side of the passage, was the first to hear that fearful cry,—the first to follow the direction of the almost palsied hand, that pointed to the bed. There lay Julia, as coldly, "deadly pale," as the wintry snow of her native clime. Her right hand was pressed upon her heart, where the death-dart had quivered, but no distortion of pain marred the divine repose of her features. One might have thought she slept, so still, so serene she looked, so fair a rose-tint still lingered on her softly parted lips; but there was something in the half-closed motionless blue orbs, that showed that the fountain of life was frozen forever. Robert stood gazing upon her a moment, as immovable as herself; then kneeling down he laid his hand on the chill, snowy brow, which had throbbed the night before under his parting kiss, and bent over the icy lips that never more would curl with the warm breath of life. Yes! she was dead—cold—motionless; and Robert felt the chillness of mortality creeping through every vein and artery, felt the sublime mystery of death folding up his spirit and shutting out every living sound. He heard no longer the shrieks of Nora, he heard not the wails and sobs that now went up in the chamber of death, he was scarcely conscious

when Henry, rushing between him and the fair, frozen form, clasped it in agony to his bosom, calling on God to save her, in the wildness and impotence of grief.

"Oh! Father of mercies," cried Robert, clasping his hands and raising them to heaven, in a burst of irrepressible emotion, "blind and erring that I am! I promised to guard and cherish her on earth, that her days might be long upon the land; but thou hast crowned her with everlasting love, even with life for evermore."

We will not attempt to describe the consternation and dismay following this startling event. Every means usually employed to rekindle the apparently extinguished spark of life was vainly used. The spirit had returned to the God who gave it; and neither tears, nor prayers, nor human skill could recall it to the lovely clay it had animated for the brief space of seventeen years.

Oh, happy, happy Julia! why should we mourn for thee? Better, far better, to pass away, as thou hast done, in thy unspotted purity, thy guileless youth, in the springtime of thy love, the dawning of thy hopes, than live to feel the blight and the mildew, the cold winds, the beating rains of darker years. Life glided from thee in a dream of bliss, which never could be realized, for there is no paradise below even for love like thine. We will not weep for thee, beloved of a heavenly bridegroom, but for the parents and kindred who wait thy return with the opening flowers of spring, and for the brother who loved thee with such passing tenderness, and to whose care thou wast committed as a precious, holy trust.

Who that looks upon thee now, arrayed in spotless white as the bride of the grave, with orange blossoms and sweet geranium leaves wreathed in thy golden hair and placed in thy snowy hands, thine eyes now gently closed as if in quiet sleep, and that divine smile on thy pure, placid lips, but would wish to gaze forever and think it sacrilege that dust should cover a form so surpassingly fair? "But dust thou

art, and unto dust thou must return." Beauty cannot avert the inexorable decree, nor love arrest the mournful progress of decay.

The loud cry, the heart-rending sob, were no longer heard in the presence of that beauteous sleeper. The silent tear, the pallid cheek, and stilly step spoke a more subdued, affecting sorrow.

Linda, who had learned the first sad lesson of life's brevity by the dying-bed of Luta, repressed her own grief that she might assuage the anguish of others. Henry shut himself in his room, refusing to be comforted; but Robert forced him to unbar his door, and listen to the breathings of sympathy and the consolations of religion.

Nora, on whom the shock fell like a thunderbolt, was at first nearly deprived of reason. Death had entered her bed-room, had lain down by her side, had breathed his chill breath upon her, and yet she knew it not. And it was the first time she had ever consciously been in its awful presence. It is no wonder that her brain reeled with the suddenness of the terror, that her gay, exuberant spirits turned frantically from the contemplation of a scene so wondrous sad. Linda exhausted herself in unavailing efforts to soothe her wild excitement, when Aristides, with sad and earnest tenderness, came to her relief. There was an authority in his manner, to which Nora, physically weakened by her stormy emotions, passively yielded, and he led her in silence to the couch where Julia now reclined, looking more like an angel of heaven than a child of clay.

"Weep no more, oh! *virgo infelix*," exclaimed the tender moralist, his own eyes streaming with tears; "fear to disturb the mystery of her repose. God has given his beloved sleep, and beautiful is the hush of life on the face of the young. Why should those lament, oh! *puella lachrymosa*, for one who might well mourn for you, if tears ever fell in Paradise? Look upon her in silence, and adore the sovereignty of the Most High.

*“‘Et rose elle a vecu ce que vivant les roses,
L'espace d'un matin.’*

A rose she has lived, as roses live, the space of a morning,” as the poet pathetically remarks.

Nora, who had not dared to look on the face of the dead since the first fearful glance, shrinking with nameless terror from the aspect of mortality, gazed and gazed, rooted to the spot by a mighty spell, till the wild tossings of her spirit settled down into a glassy calmness. She held her breath, lest she should ruffle the stillness of those fair, lifeless looks. She repressed her sobs, lest they should interrupt the heavenly placidity of her repose.

“Oh, never again,” murmured she, leaning with childlike submissiveness on the arm of Aristides, “will I fear to look on the face of death. ’Tis beautiful, ’tis divine! But take me away—I cannot bear it any longer.”

Nora laid the solemn lesson next her heart. She continued to weep, but it was in silence; and when her tears fell too abundantly, Aristides would whisper in her ear some beautiful aphorism and pathetic quotation, that sunk like balm into her softened soul.

It is not necessary to enter minutely into the circumstances that naturally grew out of this melancholy event. Few, indeed, are so happy as not to be familiar with them all; and sad, too sad for description, is the paraphernalia of the grave. In this instance, more than the usual mournfulness involved the funeral rites. Immediately after the customary consecration of prayer, Henry was to commence his homeward journey, and carry back to her native soil all that remained of the young, betrothed Julia.

“Would that I could go with you,” said Robert, “and assist you in performing your melancholy mission! Had I not pledged my word to Roland Lee to remain during his absence, as the guardian of his family, nothing would keep me

from this sacred duty. But my spirit will follow you, dear brother and friend, and hover round our Julia's precious dust."

"If it were possible," answered Henry, who was now outwardly calm, "I know it would be done. But what matters it? There is no remembrance in the grave, whither I bear her. Even you, so dearly loved, must be forgotten there. No, Robert! remain to guard the living, while I go and bury my dead."

"Henry!" said Robert, with unutterable solemnity, "you are laying up in heaven costly gems. Is not your heart there also? If this should be our last meeting on earth, shall I not embrace my brother in that blissful clime where the night of death never falls, and where the gloom of parting never comes?"

"I trust so—I trust so," exclaimed Henry, pressing Robert's hand with a fervent grasp; "friendship like ours is immortal, and must partake of the eternity of our existence. Oh, my friend! if in this life only we had hope, what miserable beings would we be in an hour like this! I thank you, Robert, for the oil with which you have fed the dim lamp of my faith. It was nearly quenched by the shades that so suddenly darkened round me. Your prayers have sustained, your example strengthened me. It is a great thing to have a Christian friend! to be united to a noble heart by the bonds of Christian love!"

"Oh, poor and weak is any other tie," exclaimed Robert; "weaker than the smoking flax or the breaking reed."

Little did Henry anticipate, in the wild, thoughtless days of college-life, such an interview as this with the passionate, the haughty, the unbelieving Robert Graham.

He was to commence his journey in the morning; for not till then could the triple coffin be obtained, necessary for the unconscious traveller. At twilight he wandered in the garden, where Julia so delighted to stray, to drink in for the last time

the delicious freshness of an atmosphere for which he would vainly sigh in his cold Northern home. It seemed strange to see every thing so green and blooming still, when she, so young and fair, lay cold and blighted within. As he turned into one of the shadiest paths he met Nora, looking so pale and wan, with such heavy eyes and springless steps, it was difficult to identify her with the mirth-loving, care-defying being whom, with all her faults, he had most sincerely loved. She had come out into the open air; for, as the evening shades descended, the walls which enclosed the mystery of death oppressed and chilled her. She wanted to remove herself as far from them as possible.

As soon as she saw Henry, whose pale, sad countenance indicated a sorrow that passed show, she held out her hand, and burst into tears.

"Oh, Henry!" she cried, giving way to a passion of sorrow and remorse for the levity and waywardness which had alienated him from her, and which she had hitherto been too proud to express. "In this moment of anguish and bereavement, pity and forgive me. For *her* sake, forgive me—I will not ask it for my own."

"More than forgiveness—take my blessing, Nora, for every tear you shed. I am not, then, utterly bereaved;" and, drawing her hand through his arm, they walked through the long, winding avenues, till the thick foliage became dewy and chill. They did not talk of love and hope beneath the cypress-boughs of sorrow; but they felt, perhaps unconsciously, the soothing influence of both. Henry, who had been struggling against the fascination which Nora exercised over him, believing her destitute of sensibility and womanliness, found a balm in her proffered sympathy, a charm in her unaffected humility and ingenuousness, the more deeply appreciated because so unlooked for.

"What a sad, sad journey you have before you!" she said, as they slowly approached the house, and their eyes simul-

taneously rested on the open window, which admitted the night-breeze to the faded flower it would never more revive. "And what sad hearts you will leave behind! I shrink from the mournful future."

"It will not be always dark, Nora. I have known before what sorrow is, and light has dawned on its shadows. The clouds of the heart dissolve in tears; and God places on the mist the bow of promise, as a surety that the seedtime and harvest of love and joy shall never utterly fail. I may not see you alone again before my departure. Sweet, though sorrowful, will be the memories of your Southern land. Whether I ever return to it again depends, Nora, on you alone. This is no time to talk of love, but I have laid bare to you my whole heart, in a happier hour. As it was then, so it is now,—only I have more need of the boon I asked, and feel that I could prize it more. There is one less to love me now, Nora."

"If you ever do return, Henry," answered Nora, in the heartfelt tones of genuine tenderness and sincerity, "you shall find one heart to welcome and to love you; corrected, I trust, of its worst faults, and willing to surrender itself with all a woman's gentleness to your guardian keeping."

They turned back, and walked again through the darkening avenues, and their hearts were more united, more melted in one, by the mutual sorrow and sympathy which had unveiled them to each other, than they would have been in years of gay, mirthful intercourse.

It was not without reason that the great master of human wisdom said, "By the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better." "It is better to go to the house of mourning than the house of feasting."

Sorrow is a miner,—it digs deep in the heart, and finds its embedded gold. It is a diver, and brings up the ocean pearls. It is a high priest, and consecrates the sacrifice it imposes.

CHAPTER XII.

WHAT strange contrasts human life presents !

A little more than three years ago, the same room at Rosavilla, now prepared for the funeral rites, was occupied by a brilliant bridal throng. The same youthful, pale, and dark-haired minister who pronounced the marriage blessing on the bridal pair, stood now at the head of the coffin, about to consecrate, by the prayer of faith, the solemnities of death. Linda remembered this coincidence well, and as she bowed her head on her hands to hide her gushing tears, they fell for the living Robert as fast as for the encoffined Julia.

"I have been marking out for him paths of earthly felicity," thought she, "strewed with the blossoms of love; but God is preparing for him a more glorious destiny. His is to be the palm of victory, the crown of glory awarded to those who, through tribulations and struggles, enter into the kingdom of heaven. I yield thee," continued her musing, weeping spirit, "beloved brother of my soul, to the cause thou hast espoused, the Master thou hast so nobly served. Go, if thou wilt, once more to pagan lands, and give to many a darkened soul the hopes that now illumine ours; these weak hands will no longer hold thee back, for God claims thee, thou chastened by many trials."

The voice of Robert, in its peculiar under-tone of deep pathos, stole on her meditations like a strain of rich, solemn music. He read one of those beautiful hymns appropriate to the memory of the early departed, and the strains mingling with the breath of the white roses and jessamines, funeral blossoms that were scattered profusely on the coffin-lid, ascended as incense to heaven. Brief as solemn was the consecrating prayer, for the smoke of the steamer in which Henry was to embark was already darkly curling up into the blue sky.

"I am the resurrection and the life," he repeated, and his voice, rising in sweetness and power, seemed to fill the room with an atmosphere of religious grandeur; "he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die.

"I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another."

It was while uttering these sublime words of inspiration she whom he had thus consecrated as the bride of death, was carried out, through a line of sobbing negroes, whose demonstrations of grief had frequently interrupted the affecting and impressive rite.

The whole household followed to the river-side. Robert walked in front with uncovered head. On one side of the bier was seen the tall and stately form of the Christian Indian, on the other, the slender and gray-clad figure of Aristides Longwood. Henry, Linda, and Nora walked in the shadow of the dark, sweeping pall, while in the rear came the tender-hearted slaves, headed by Aunt Judy, sorrowing that they should never look again upon the sweet young face of the fair Northern stranger. As the procession went winding down the path that led to the river, now embosomed in the shade of tall, branching trees, now emerging into sunshine, the negroes sang a low, plaintive melody in some of their own peculiar words, and it mingled solemnly with the murmurs of the great river of the western world.

Henry could not speak when the moment of parting came. He had not realized till that moment all that he had lost, and all that he was leaving. The consciousness pressed upon him with iron weight, and his manly fortitude was crushed by its burden. He dashed from his eyes the blinding tears, but they would gather, and his throat closed on the attempted adieu.

Strange! dearly as he now loved Nora, and knowing that he was beloved again, he felt less pain in parting with her than Robert. He would return with the flowers of a Northern spring to claim her as his own, but where would then be the friend to whom he felt drawn by an attachment passing even the love of woman?

The hand of Robert was the last he grasped, with a long, lingering pressure.

"May the God of the traveller watch over and bless you, and guard the sacred ashes of my betrothed bride," said Robert, his dark, melancholy eyes glistening with emotion, as they gave the parting glance to his friend, then turned to the heavens, glittering in morning glory above them.

Henry stood on deck, as long as he could catch a glimpse of the figures lingering on the shore,—as long as the white turrets of Rosavilla were seen rising above the green shade-trees into the blue of the sky. The waves of the majestic Mississippi rolled beneath, sparkling with ten thousand diamonds in the sun,—the shores smiled in summer beauty,—the river breeze blew with pure and inspiring influence,—every thing was grand, and beautiful, and bright,—yet those heaving waters were drifting onward a weight of wo to the bosom of a now happy home. And he, the sad survivor,—the lonely guardian of the dead,—turned with sickening heart from all this bloom, and brightness, and grandeur, to hide his sorrow from the gaze of man.

Sad, as Nora had said, were the hearts he left behind. There was not even a grave to weep over,—that place immorally set apart for the mourner's tears. Nora, who had a cause of sorrow,—as yet known only to herself,—shut herself in her chamber, to weep for the absent Henry, and sigh over the opportunities she had wasted of proving to him her appreciation of his worth.

Linda wandered sadly through the apartment, hallowed by

the recent presence of death. The wilted blossoms, fallen from the dark coffin-lid, lay scattered on the carpet, breathing a melancholy, dying perfume. The withering petals, and sweet, faint odour, were emblematical of the early fate of her whose relics they had embalmed, and Linda sighed as she inhaled what seemed to her their deadly fragrance. Why was Roland absent, on whose sympathizing bosom she could weep away the oppression of her heart? When would he return, to gladden with his looks of love her now saddened home?

The door opened, and Robert entered, prompted by the same feelings to seek the place, haunted by such mournful, yet holy memories. She hurried forward to meet him, and, subdued by the sadness and solemnity of the scene through which they had just passed, leaned weeping on his shoulder.

"Oh, Robert," said she, "you are all that is left me. Roland is away—Julia is gone, my sweet, adopted sister is taken from me; what should I do, bereft of your sympathy and tenderness? Yet it is I who should comfort *you*, for never again will you find a heart that will love you so truly, so exclusively, and so devotedly."

"I have done with earthly love," answered Robert, raising his eyes from Linda's drooping form to heaven; "its last, pale blossom dies on Julia's early grave. Heaven has been kinder to her than you, dear sister. Poor indeed was the return I could make for her pure and boundless love. God knew it, and took her to himself, who is love immeasurable, unchangeable, and everlasting."

Linda listened with thrilling interest, as Robert continued to lift her thoughts to high and holy themes. She gradually separated the sweet image of Julia from the appalling accompaniments of death, and placed it in that band of adoring seraphs, whose robes have been washed white in the blood of the Lamb.

It was long before Nora recovered from the awful shock she

had received. She started, and turned pale at every sudden sound and motion. She shrank, with a nervous shiver, from the shadows of night,—she, who never before knew what nervous trepidation meant, and whose dauntless spirit scoffed at the terrors of imagination, as well as actual dangers. Linda insisted that she should share her own room, and sought, by every gentle and persuasive means, to rouse her from the morbid state in which she was sinking. The little Walton unconsciously aided his lovely mother in her daily task. The midnight visit of the dark king of the grave had left no cloud on his infantine smile. It still beamed joyously, though other brows were sad. He seemed an embodied promise, that if youth, and beauty, and life had passed away, it was ever springing up anew, in defiance of the conqueror's power. Nora became passionately fond of the child, and her smiles gradually returned in answer to the sweet smiles of innocence. But the gay laugh, that rang like a chime of silver bells through all the house, no longer echoed in its walls.

About one week after the departure of Henry,—it was perhaps an hour before the usual bed-time,—when they were quietly seated in the parlour, Linda and Nora engaged in some feminine occupation, while Robert read aloud, and Aristides listened, with his chin propped upon his right hand. Aunt Judy came to the door, and beckoned her young mistress. She would not for the world interrupt “Massa Robert’s beautiful preaching,” as she seemed to think all his reading must be sermons.

“Miss Lindy,” said Judy, smoothing down her apron, and speaking in a low voice, as soon as she had closed the doors, “there’s an old woman down there by my cabin, that says she must speak to the mistress, and nobody else wont do. I tells her she’d better give her business to me, so as not to pester Miss Lindy, when she’s setting up with company in the parlour; but she wont hear to nothing of the kind. She says

she'll not entertain you more than a minnit; but she's got news that you'll be glad to hear."

"Perhaps," thought Linda, her cheeks flushing with excited feelings, "perhaps she brings me tidings connected with the robbery of my child. Perhaps it is the wife of a sailor, who may have met the vessel in which Roland sailed, and brings some message from him. Give me a shawl, Aunt Judy," said she, aloud, "and I will follow you directly."

It was no uncommon occurrence for poor emigrants to come up from the boats, when they were detained at the landing, to claim the charities of the sweet mistress of Rosavilla, whose name floated over the waves of the Mississippi, embalmed with the blessings of the poor. There was nothing peculiar in this circumstance but the especial intelligence to be communicated to her, and, connecting this with the idea of her secret enemy, she followed Judy, with her curiosity and interest painfully excited.

As she came near Judy's cabin, which was quite aloof from the others, having a larger garden and a wider space in front, she saw the figure of a woman standing close to the fence, under the branches of a cottonwood tree. As there was no moon, there was a pine-torch blazing on a mud-capped tripod not far from the cabin. By this light Linda perceived that the woman looked bent and decrepid. She was wrapped in an old, brown cloak, and a large, old-fashioned, straw bonnet tied down under the chin, with a black silk handerchief pitched in ludicrous manner over her face.

"Go into your cabin, Aunt Judy, while I speak to her," said Linda, drawing still nearer the old women, "and see what she wants. Poor old creature! she must be tired standing there so long. I will ask her to go in, and talk with me, in your nice little bedroom."

"Don't let her keep you long," whispered Aunt Judy, as she turned into her cabin. "I sorter suspicions her. Mebby she's a rogue. The Lord have mercy if I pass a wrong judgment!"

"My good woman," said Linda, with that graceful courtesy which never forsook her, even when addressing the lowest and poorest, "if you wish to speak with me, come into the cabin, and sit down. You look too old and infirm to be standing abroad."

"It is but a moment that I have to spare," answered the woman, in a thick voice, somewhat difficult to understand; "the boat will be off from shore directly, and I must not be left behind."

"Then tell me quickly what you have to communicate," said Linda, thinking the voice of the stranger indicated more strength than her bending form. "What tidings do you bring that I will rejoice to hear? Tell me quickly, and I will reward you liberally."

"Your child was carried off a while ago, was it not?" cried the woman, coming a step or two nearer Linda, and inclining her head toward her. "I am deaf in one ear, and you must come close, for I dare not speak too loud."

"My child!" exclaimed Linda, pressing forward, forgetting all personal repugnance, in the absorbing interest of the subject,—"yes. Do you know any thing of the ruffian? Who is he? Where is he? Why does he wish to rob me of my child? Tell me what you know, and do not—do not keep me in suspense!"

"Can't she hear?" cried the woman, pointing to the cabin. "It is as much as my life is worth if she does."

"No, no!—but step farther off, if you fear."

"But aint there anybody skulking about the yard, or behind the fences?"

"No, no! again I say," cried Linda, impatiently; and taking the old woman by the cloak, she pulled her farther under the boughs of the cottonwood tree. At any other moment, she would have shrunk from touching a figure so repulsive, for there was something about it singularly disagreeable. She could not distinguish her features under her

deep bonnet, shaded as it was by long, black, tangled locks, hanging down each side of her face; but every time she spoke, the tones of her thick, husky voice made Linda recoil with instinctive disgust. The thought, however, of being able to discover her enemy, and securing her child against future assaults, swallowed up every other consideration.

"My husband knows the man that stole your child. He's a poor sailor, nothing but a cripple, that left the ship for the steamboat, and has to scuffle hard to get along. He's just round the corner of the fence waiting for me. He heard you would give a reward to any one that would discover the ruffian; and he told me to come up with him, and get you out, where he could tell you. He was afraid he might be taken for the man himself, as he wears sailor's clothes."

All the time the old woman was talking, she had slowly approached the corner of the fence, where, she said, her husband was waiting; and all the time Linda instinctively followed, forgetting herself in her child.

"Where is your husband?" she asked, perceiving no man near; and, for the first time, a vague suspicion that all was not right entering her mind. The extreme caution of the old woman, her drawing her away so far from the cabin, and deferring her communication so long, all at once struck her as mysterious. She felt sick from agitation, and looked back to the blazing tripod, wondering that it appeared so distant.

"I will not go any farther!" she exclaimed, drawing back step by step, afraid of manifesting her rising fears. If the woman had any sinister design, she probably had some accomplice ready to do her bidding. Besides, her husband might be in the shadow of the fence, waiting to tell the secret, and claim the reward.

"I can run swifter than this old woman," thought she, "if she be an impostor; and what harm can she be meditating against me?"

"He's tired of waiting, I see, and I must tell you myself,"

cried the woman, coming up close to the retreating Linda, untying, at the same time, the black silk handkerchief that fastened her bonnet; "this chokes me; I can't talk."

Quick, as a flash of lightning, she darted behind Linda, threw the handkerchief round her mouth, thickly folded as it was, so as to muffle her cries, and seizing her in a pair of strong, masculine arms, started off in the direction of the woods with a stride that bid age and decrepitude defiance.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!" chuckled the wretch. That sound—that well-remembered sound—fell on Linda's fainting ear, calling up the most horrible scene of her life. She tried to tear off the muffling folds of the handkerchief, and send her soul abroad in shrieks of agony, but her arms were pinioned to her side by the straining arms of the ruffian. Panting, suffocating, almost dying with terror, her head sunk back, and her long, loosened hair swept against the rough bark of the trees, as she was carried on with dizzying rapidity. She struggled with the deadly faintness that wrapped her as in a mist. Any thing but insensibility! Welcome death, but not insensibility! But it came, happily for her; else her reason might have fled, from the horror of her situation.

"She waxes heavy; her face is cold," cried the pretended woman, striding onward with demon speed; "but I must not stop—I must not—till I reach the old hut in the woods!—no, no!—I will not be baffled a second time!—I will not! All I wanted of the child was to get the mother in my power; and now I have got her without the child, which is a thousand times better!—it is!—ha, ha, ha, ha!"

Thus exulting and chuckling, the villain hurried on, cutting the woods by a path almost impervious, crossing marshes, and breaking through tangled bushes, that rent the soft folds of Linda's garments and left fragments behind, hanging from the twigs. He had torn the bandage from her mouth, as soon as he had discovered her insensibility, that the air might re-

vive her, for he did not mean that death should cheat him of his prey.

There was an old hut deep in the wood, remote from any habitation, which was called the Haunted Hut, from the tradition of a murder having been committed in it. The negroes asserted that the headless trunk of a man was often seen near midnight roaming the woods, in the direction of the old haunted cabin. You could not tempt one of them, with all the gold of California, to approach it alone after the twilight hour. It was so old, so low, so sheltered by trees and overgrown with moss and creeping vines, that it was scarcely distinguishable in the broad light of day from the forest growth that surrounded it. This damp, dismal, almost inaccessible place, had been discovered and prepared for the present occasion. There was a stream of turbid water to cross, bridged by a narrow and slippery plank. The moment he reached the opposite side of the plank, the disguised man turned and dashed the plank into the water. When Linda opened her eyes, recovering from her long and deadly swoon, she was lying on a low bed, in a little dismal apartment, lighted by a single glimmering lamp. At first, she could not distinguish one object from another, neither could she recollect the horrible circumstances which had brought her there. She put her hands to her forehead and pushed back her dripping hair; she pressed them on her eyes, which seemed darkened with mist. All at once, a blaze kindled on the hearth, or the place where a hearth once was laid, and memory flushed up with a simultaneous flame. She recollects every thing, even the horrible ha—ha; and starting to her feet, and looking wildly round her, her eyes were arrested by the dreaded form of her enemy, now no longer disguised. There he stood, right before her, in all the exultation of successful villainy; the old, brown cloak, the large straw-bonnet, the long, tangled black locks all thrown aside with the stooping back and decrepid appearance of well-dissembled age. There were the stout, firm-set figure,

the red, bristling hair, the small, gleaming black eye, the white, uneven teeth, and remarkably-formed mouth of the Scottish monster, McLeod.

"Ha, ha!" said he, chuckling and rubbing his hands together, while his eyes glittered with ferocious joy. "I am very glad to see you again—I am. Hope I see you very well—I do. Wont you shake hands with an old friend? I'm willing to forget and forgive. Never could bear malice against any one—I could'nt,—much less against you, pretty creature."

Linda gazed at him a moment with a steadfast gaze; then glanced at the shutters—the wooden shutters—all fastened within with iron hooks; at the door, secured with a long wooden bar, that slid into large iron rings; and she knew she was in the power of an inexorable foe. How far she was from home, she knew not; where she was, she knew not. She only knew that it was McLeod before her, who, she had heard long ago, was returned to his native country, and whom she remembered only to forgive.

"Great God!" she exclaimed, sinking down again on the side of the bed, for her limbs bent under her. "How long have I been here? and why am I brought?"

"You've been here but a few moments," answered McLeod, still rubbing his exulting hands. "You must excuse me for wetting your beautiful hair so, but I had to pour cold water on you to bring you to—I had. I did not mean to frighten you so—I did'nt. I just brought you here for company, my dear. I've fitted up the place nicely,—on purpose for you. Don't you like it?"

Had Linda perceived one outlet of escape, one ray of hope, she would have been frantic till she had effected her release; but the utterness of her despair rendered her passive. She sat with her white hands tightly clasped, her eyes fixed as if converted into stone, her hair darkened by the water which had drenched it, clinging in dishevelled masses to her neck and shoulders, her shawl of scarlet camel's hair, torn by the

brambles,—her whole appearance indicating the abandonment of despair.

But while she sat thus, white, rigid, motionless as a statue, her mind was at work with preternatural activity. All her past eventful life rose up before her, the dangers she had incurred, the perils she had escaped, the unexpected guardian that had been raised up to defend her. If any human being had reason to put their trust in God, it was she, for had he not in former trials given his angels charge concerning her, and arrested the billows that threatened to overwhelm her? She thought of Roland on transatlantic shores, of Robert in Rosavilla's shades, of Tuscarora sleeping, doubtless, on his bed of furs. Where was the deliverer to arise from?

“Oh, that thou wouldst rend the heavens and come down!” was the prayer of her spirit, as she lifted upward her tearless and agonized glance; “then the mountains of peril would flow down at thy presence. Thine arm is not shortened, that it cannot save. Thine ear is not heavy, that it cannot hear.”

There was something so unearthly in her countenance, so deadly in her aspect, that McLeod, hardened as he was, trembled as he gazed, fearing her soul might depart in the ecstasy of her terror.

“ You look pale,” he cried, going to a table in a corner by the chimney; and, taking up a black bottle, he poured out some wine in a gourd, and brought it to her to drink. “ This will revive you, and keep you from taking cold. Taste; I brought it for you—I did.”

Linda shook her head, with a repelling gesture. She would have swallowed it, for she felt so faint, so cold, so *gone*; and it might impart a transient warmth and life, but she feared it might be adulterated with some Eastern drug. She had read and heard of such things, and as nothing which she had ever read or heard surpassed the horror of her present situation, why should she think any deed too dark for the villain to perpetrate?

"Give me water," she cried faintly, "and leave me, if you would not see me die."

As McLeod turned to dip the water from the bucket, which stood on a shelf in an opposite corner of the room, his back was toward her. She glanced wildly round to see if any weapon of defence was within her reach, when she saw something gleam on the bed-cover, in the ruddy blaze of the chimney. It reflected a cold, blue lustre, and she knew it was the flash of steel. The knife must have fallen from the villain's leathern belt, while endeavouring to rouse her from her deadly swoon. With the instinct of the hunted deer, that thinks only of self-preservation when the track of blood is behind it, she grasped the weapon in her left hand, and wrapped it in the scarlet foldings of her shawl. It was instantaneously done,—done while McLeod was dipping the water from the bucket; but so fearful was she of detection, that when he approached her, she fancied the serpent-gleam of his eye had a more malicious twinkle, and her heart throbbed as though every vein and artery were bursting.

"You look better now," cried he, for on one white cheek a faint red was beginning to glow, relieving her death-like pallor; "sit down in this chair, and make yourself at home. There is no use in being frightened. You shall be treated like a lady—you shall. I havn't got any negroes here to wait upon you; but I will wait upon you myself—ha, ha!"

"Take me back to my home, then," she cried, sinking into the chair which he brought to the fireside, still keeping her shawl in gathered folds around her; "take me back, McLeod, and I will not only forgive this outrage, but you shall receive for my ransom uncounted gold."

"I've been at too much trouble to give you up so readily," said McLeod, seating himself near her, and running the fingers of his right hand through his fiery locks with ineffable self-conceit. "You thought I was in Scotland all this time—did you? Well, I have been there. I thought you were

drowned, and I didn't feel very comfortable about it—I didn't. It seemed to me I should feel better farther off. By-and-by I came back, and started for the Great West. I saw your beautiful mansion, looking down so grand on the river, and when they told me whose it was, I fairly leaped for joy—I did. I did not like to think of you in the deep waters. I wanted to see you again. I wanted to see if you were as pretty as ever—ha, ha! We strong-hearted men don't like to give up a plan; so when I came back, I stopped and watched my opportunity. No matter how—I saw you—and you looked—ha, ha!—a thousand times prettier than you were before—you did."

"Stop," cried Linda, becoming indignant, concealing her fears; "I will not hear such odious language. Tell me what you wanted of my child? what benefit you expected to derive from such a fiendish act?"

"I thought I should get the mother in my power. I didn't want the pretty brat—I didn't. If your child were lost, would not you follow some secret messenger who told you where your darling was secreted?"

"Thank heaven!—oh, thanks be to heaven," exclaimed Linda, "that there at least you were frustrated!—that Roland's child is spared, should he never again behold its unhappy mother!"

"Don't be so excited, my dear. There's no occasion in the world for it,—none in the world. Every thing has been done in the quietest way possible. You never thought who the old woman was—did you? I heard them talking on the boat, how good you were to the poor emigrants, and so I turned into one myself—that's all. I carried you as carefully through the woods as if you were a little child, and I'll be as tender of you all the days of my life, if you'll only trust me, and not look at me as if I were such a hideous monster—ha, ha!"

Linda imagined she really beheld a redeeming spark of tenderness and feeling in the reddish-black eye burning so near her, and she resolved to make one appeal to his better nature,

before she threw herself a helpless victim on the bosom of Omnipotence.

"McLeod," said she, turning full upon his face her heavenly and entreating eyes, "I trusted you once, when a persecuted orphan, I committed myself to your guardian care. You deceived me—cruelly, wantonly deceived me. I had forgiven you, almost forgotten your existence in the happiness that has since been mine. You have a heart. You *must* have one—else why should you care when you thought me plunged in the burying river? Take me back to my home,—take me back to my child. By the mother that bore you, restore me to my child. It shall learn to bless you with its lisping tongue. I will bless you,—Roland will bless you, instead of avenging his wrongs. Heaven will bless you, and fill with favours your relenting hand. I see you are touched. I see you have a heart. Unbar those windows, open that prison-door, and set me free."

She rose in the energy of speaking, and clasping her beautiful hands, the weapon she had so carefully guarded, and now momentarily forgotten, dropped to the floor, and the fire-light sparkled on the gleaming steel.

"What is that?" cried he, springing forward; then clapping his hand to his girdle, exclaimed, "ha, ha! my knife. How came you by it, you little blood-thirsty deceiver? I've caught you now—I have."

Before he could seize the weapon, for he was stout and clumsy in his motions, Linda had grasped it with her right hand, and held it glittering above her head.

"'Tis mine!" she cried, her eyes flashing with the electric splendour of passion; "'tis mine! Heaven threw it in my way, and I will relinquish it only with life. Fear me—for I am armed. Fear me—for you know not what insulted womanhood dares to do. I have pleaded to ears of stone—to a heart of iron. I will plead no longer—I am strong—I defy your power."

As Linda thus stood with uplifted hand, grasping the glittering knife, her brow contracted by the intensity of her resolution, her eye dark with indignant fire, her hair wildly waving, and her left hand gathering the crimson drapery over her bosom, she might have been taken for a young, avenging Medea. The Scotchman, with the cowardliness of guilt, quailed before her, and dared not attempt to wrest the knife from her desperate grasp. He glanced at the door, as if he would like to escape from the victim he had betrayed into his power,—so mean and dastardly is villainy when it meets, face to face, a pure, undaunted spirit. But even while he quailed, he more intensely admired, and determined to guard her with double vigilance. He had no desire that she should kill herself or him, as in her present frantic state she might do, and therefore thought it expedient to soothe and capitulate, satisfied that he had her in his power, and that no one would dream of searching for her in that haunted and accursed spot.

It may be thought strange that this man should thus, after the lapse of years, renew a persecution so peculiar in its character, so dogged and persevering. But there are instances where a whole life has been devoted to a scheme of passion or vengeance, and even in death the smouldering fires would break forth. The personal loathing and horror which Linda manifested when he first made his odious addresses, rankled in his memory, and even when he believed her dead, driven to desperation by his treachery, he remembered it with bitterness and rancour. It was not because he had a heart capable of remorse, that he had fled the country, but he feared the vengeance of Robert and Roland, and he deemed “discretion the better part of valour.” The tale he had told Linda was true. The sight of her magnificent residence excited his curiosity. Lurking in ambush in the deep shades that surrounded Rosavilla, he beheld her in the fair beauty of womanhood; and the love he had formerly cherished—for he loved her as much as such a selfish, sordid being can love—awakened, mingled with

the most vindictive and rancorous feelings. His capture of the child was a sudden suggestion of Satan. There was nothing premeditated in the act ; he was skulking to watch for a nobler prey. But after being so unexpectedly foiled by the "tall fiery boy," as he still called Robert, he vowed he would move heaven and earth in the accomplishment of his design. He had laid his plans warily, resolving to keep Linda secreted in the haunted hut, till, properly disguised, he could carry her away in some obscure boat, to a wild spot in the boundless West.

She was now in his power. The young girl who had scorned and defied him on the bosom of the winding Alabama—the wedded wife enthroned in wealth and luxury on the shores of the lordly Mississippi; in spite of the triple guardianship which protected her in her husband's absence; in spite of the strong arms of Tuscarora stretched boastingly from his wig-wam cabin to the orange bowers of Rosavilla; in spite of Aristides, that antiquated literary baby, enclosed within inverted commas; in spite of Robert, the lover-brother, the hypocritical minister, the pretended missionary, the wolf in sheep's clothing,—“yes ! in spite of all these,” said the exulting villain, “he had her in his power.”

CHAPTER XIII.

“I WONDER what detains Linda so long ?” said Nora, feeling a little impatient for Robert to continue his reading. “I would not like to be a housekeeper, to be called away so often from the most interesting occupations.”

‘Graceful and useful all she does,
Blessing and blest where'er she goes,
Pure-bosomed as the watery glass,
And heaven reflected in her face,’

as Cowper charmingly delineates," said Aristides. "Such is our lovely hostess,—'a perfect woman nobly planned,' as Wordsworth comprehensively remarks."

"'The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil,'" as Solomon proverbially declares, said Nora, with one of her long-slumbering, magnetic smiles. "What is that?" she cried, starting up and trembling, for something heavy came rushing into the hall, uttering sounds of lamentation and wo.

"Oh, Massa Robert!" exclaimed Aunt Judy, standing in the doorway and wringing her hands; "come along, for the blessed Jesus' sake, come along, and see what a Lord a mercy be the matter. She's gone, sure as I be live to tell it. Oh, lordy! Poor old Judy! Oh, mercy, what the kingdom will become of us?"

Robert dashed the book on the carpet, and sprang through the door, heedless that he hurled poor Judy midway in the passage.

"Where, tell me where?" he cried, snatching Roland's rifle from a rack formed of the branching antlers of the deer, and rushing to the front of the verandah. "Come on," he exclaimed to the frightened, bewildered creature stumbling behind, almost paralyzed by terror. "Come on, and, in God Almighty's name, tell me what you mean!"

"Oh, Massa Robert!"

"Don't call me master," cried he, stamping his foot in the frenzy of his excitement. "Where? Which way?" pointing to the right and left.

"That way; that way, massa. Only think! an old woman!"

"A woman!" cried Robert.

"Yes, massa, nothing but an old woman."

Nora and Aristides, who had followed the lightning steps of Robert, now stood by him, with suspended breath and colourless faces, listening to Aunt Judy's almost incoherent story. She had "suspicioned," as she said, the old woman, and stolen

out of her back door, and crept along inside of the fence, to see if there was any gang in waiting.

"I seed the old woman, bent e'enamost double as she was, snatch her up like a born baby, and, lord a mercy, I seed a cloven foot all afire, when he kick up and fly off,—fly off, right round that corner."

By this time the rifle of Aristides was in his hand, for he was quite a Nimrod of the woods, and it was astonishing with what a fleet step he followed Robert, who scarcely waited for the explanation of Judy, mixed as it was with sobs and bewailing ejaculations.

"Let some of the strongest black men come with lighted torches," said Aristides, checking with considerate wisdom the fiery impatience of Robert. "The woods are dark, and we must not rush blindfold after the foe; oh, *puella infelix*, we will rescue thee, or die in the attempt; 'furor arma ministrat,' as Virgil"—

"For the love of God, don't stop to quote Latin now," interrupted Robert. "Here Scipio, Cæsar, light your torches at that blazing knot, and follow me—follow to the rescue of your mistress."

At that talismanic word—for Linda was adored by her slaves, and many of them, roused by Judy's outcry, were gathered round—the torches were lighted as by magic, and waving above the sable brows of the bearers.

"Let me go," cried Nora, who was in the midst of the excited group, her brain whirling, her heart palpitating with all the wildness of terror; "I dare not stay—I cannot be left alone behind."

"Stay with Judy and guard the infant," exclaimed Robert; and his voice was borne back to her by the night-breeze he was breasting, with a rapidity which left Aristides and the torch-bearers far behind.

"Guard him tenderly, *virgo tenevunia*," cried Aristides, looking back compassionately on the damsel, while he panted

to keep up with Robert's fiery speed. "This haste is unprofitable, for we shall spend our strength for naught, *Oh, juvenis vehemens*; thou art plunging on in darkness, leaving thy guide behind thee."

Robert at length seemed to recover his senses, and, pausing at the edge of the wood, wiped from his forehead the gathering moisture.

"We must separate," he cried, as soon as Aristides had overtaken him, "and go in different directions. There is a boat at the landing. Would they dare to carry her there?"

"I think not," answered Aristides; "but I will go and ascertain. The captain will assist in the search. And you—you must get Tuscarora to be your guide. He can find the track quicker than the hunter's dog."

"But the delay!" exclaimed Robert.

"You will never find your way without him. I will haste to the boat—you to his cabin. Wait not. I will meet or follow you. Oh, *nocte in felix. Deus noster refugiam.*"

"Go; you are right," cried Robert; "he must be with us;" and plunging in the wood, he cut a diagonal path to Tuscarora's cabin. The quick and ever-watchful ear of the Indian needed but one appeal, and that was a startling one. His tall figure almost instantaneously appeared in the doorway. The torch-light flashed upon him, gleaming upon the polished rifle-barrel in his left hand and the glittering hatchet in his right. "I am ready," he exclaimed.

In as few words as possible Robert told him Judy's story; while the negroes tossed away their half-burnt pine-knots, and lighted new flambeaus, that made a glorious illumination. Tuscarora's long strides soon brought him to a spot which seemed familiar to him. He paused, and his keen, hawk-like glance pierced the night shades beyond the torches' blaze.

"This path hath been lately trodden," said he, turning at once in a new direction: there was no path visible to any eyes

but his. "Ha! what is this?" pointing to some shreds of scarlet fringe, which hung from a bramble.

"'Tis a fragment of her shawl," cried Robert, shuddering at the thought of the rude manner she must have been hurried through that tangled path. "Thank God! we are in the right track."

"*Expectans—expectavi,*" exclaimed a voice from behind, and Aristides, who had been following the gleam of the flambeaus, came panting and breathless in the rear; "I have looked in vain for the missing lamb. *In te domini-speravi;* 'In thee, O Lord, do I hope.' "

"Hush!" said Tuscarora, pointing to the scarlet shreds, twined round the fingers of Robert. "Let the mouth be closed, and the eyes and *ears* open; the hand upon the rifle; the heart upon the Great Spirit."

In silence they followed their commanding leader, who, with the unwearied step and keen sagacity of his race, threaded almost impervious labyrinths, as if a map were before him guiding his course. Another fragment of scarlet fringe and a shred of white lace were seen by the Indian's ubiquitous glance, confirming them in the direction they had taken. Tuscarora knew where the haunted hut was situated. He had explored it in his forest rambles, for his lofty spirit was above the influence of superstitious fear. He believed the villain who sought concealment for crime, if he were aware of the existence of this spot, accursed by murder, would seek it, secure from intrusion or detection.

They reached the bank of the dark, turbid, and now bridgeless stream. Tuscarora paused, and, looking round, extended his right hand, which still grasped the hatchet, to some old planks that lay rotting on the bank; Aristides and Robert instinctively took the torches from the negroes, while they bridged the stream with the damp and slippery boards. As soon as they had crossed—

"Remain here," said Tuscarora, in a low voice to Robert;

"remain in perfect silence, while I go forward and explore. Come when you hear me shout, but not before. The lion hushes his roar, lest he be robbed of his prey."

It was difficult for Robert to restrain the burning impatience which urged him to rush forward to the rescue. Now, they had reached the place which seemed the goal to which Tuscarora was bound, his hopes died, and cold, shivering dread seized him. The scarlet fibres, twisted round his fingers, looked like streaks of blood, and seemed significant of her fate. What monster, clad in woman's garb, had forced her with such unheard-of audacity from the sanctities of home, and for what fell, demoniac purpose? He thought not of McLeod. He had forgotten him. The last time he had heard of him was in the heath-clad hills of his native country.

"*I will* follow you," said he to the commanding Indian,—"*but I will be silent, and wait your signal.*"

"It is good," muttered Tuscarora, yielding to the dark determination of Robert's resolute eye; "but learn the unechoing step of the red men."

Aristides, completely overcome by fatigue, sunk upon the ground, breathing prayers—half in Latin, and half in English—for the safety of Linda. The negroes, obeying the lordly Indian, crouched behind a fallen tree, extinguishing at his command their blazing flambeaus; while Tuscarora and Robert went silently on to the haunted hut. One single gleam of light came struggling through a crack in one of the wooden shutters—a gleam of inhabitancy and hope. Tuscarora, who was in advance, was the first to bend his piercing eye to this slender thread of light; but slender as it was, it gave a glimpse of the interior, which decided him at once what course to pursue. Two or three rapid strides brought him to the door, when, swinging his hatchet high in the air, he brought it down with tremendous force against the old, time-eaten boards. Another and another blow: he rained them down till the iron rings gave way, the wooden bars

loosened, and the door fell in, with a crashing, thundering sound, at McLeod's feet.

The very moment of the attack was that when Linda clenched with desperate hand the recovered blade, while McLeod cowered before the flashing lightning of her eye.

At the first stroke of the hatchet, the coward wretch sprang forward, for the door was behind him, and uttered a yell of horror. So sudden, so unexpected was the blow, it seemed as if the fiends of hell were let loose to dog his steps. Mortal man could not have tracked him at that midnight hour. He had taken the pistols from his belt after barring the door, believing all was safe, and they were now on a shelf near the entrance. Snatching the knife from the now nerveless hand of Linda, who stood immovable as a statue, even when the door fell crashing near her feet, he prepared to defend himself from the entering foe.

"Dog—wolf—ruffian!" exclaimed Tuscarora, dashing down the rifle, which he saw would be useless in the strife before him. "Dog—wolf!" repeated he, rushing toward McLeod, his dark face glowing like molten copper.

McLeod, in the desperation of his fear, writhed his way toward the opening; but Tuscarora seized him by the arm which grasped the knife, with a gripe which might have been felt through sinews of steel. Even if he could have escaped the strong, forest-born antagonist before him, Aristides, armed with his rifle, flanked on both sides by the stout negro guide, was ready to arrest his flight. Finding himself thus fearfully beset, he fought with the wild fury of animal instinct. He leaped up on the neck of Tuscarora like a huge mastiff, trying to overthrow him. He might as well attempt to overthrow the mountain cliff. Baffled in his purpose, he gnashed his teeth, and planted them, sharp as a wolf's, in the left shoulder of his adversary.

"Bloodhound!" exclaimed the Indian, writhing a moment under the fangs of the villain; then, sweeping his body down-

ward, he tore his quivering flesh from the monster's grasp, and elevated his hatchet over his head. "Crocodile of the Mississippi, beware! You have whetted your teeth on the lion's bones."

"Ha, ha, ha!" shouted McLeod,—"ha, ha, ha!" While Tuscarora was releasing himself from the teeth of the bloodhound, he had unconsciously relaxed his grasp of his right arm; and McLeod, stretching the liberated sinews, burst into a shout of fiendish laughter, and plunged the knife into the brave Indian's side. The resistance of the deer-skin robe alone prevented it from reaching his heart. Scarcely had the knife pierced the magnanimous Tuscarora, who had sought to disarm the wretch, rather than to kill him, than, with one stroke of his hatchet, he cleaved his skull, and laid him mangled and lifeless at his feet.

"Spare me, great God! spare me this!" gasped Linda, hiding her ashy face in the bosom of Robert. He had followed the entering steps of Tuscarora, and supported her in his arms during this terrible scene. He would have carried her out at once, but the grappling figures were in the doorway, making their egress impossible. Now, making a stepping-stone of the prostrate and bleeding body of McLeod, he leaped over the threshold, nor stopped till he had reached the foot of a blasted tree at some distance from the cabin. The naked branches, twisted and scathed, bent in the direction of the hut, and seemed to beckon him onward.

"Father of mercies! I thank thee—I bless thee!" he exclaimed, sinking on one knee, still sustaining his almost lifeless burden. "Terrible are thy judgments, but just and true are all thy ways, O thou King of saints!"

Linda, whose senses had not forsaken her, bent her knees at his side, clasping her trembling hands, and lifting her eyes, streaming with tears of gratitude, to heaven. She would have welcomed death as a deliverer; then what must have been the revulsion of her feelings, when she found herself rescued by

him whom, next to Roland, she loved and honoured ! She forgot, for the moment, that it was the valiant arm of Tuscarora which had opened the door of release—which had laid the oppressor low. She remembered only that Robert was near her, guarding and sustaining her, restoring her again to her husband and her child.

“ Blessings—blessings !” was all she could utter, as if she were drawing them down from the starry skies, to rest upon his head.

“ *Benedictus Dominus !*” cried a well-known voice. “ Bless the Lord—*Lauda, anima mea.* Praise the Lord, O my soul !” and Aristides knelt on the other side of the rescued Linda, and, taking her hand in both his own, tears gushed from his eyes. He had shown wonderful self-possession throughout the hours of the night ; but now, overcome by gratitude and sensibility, he wept like a child.

“ You, too, dear and faithful friend, you came to my relief,” said she, deeply touched by his emotion. “ Heaven forever bless you ! But where is the gallant Tuscarora ? Is he dead ?” she cried, starting up with sudden alarm. “ And has he died for me ? I remember it now—the flashing knife—the murderous blow. Oh, tell me not that he has fallen in the bloody strife !”

Shuddering with horror, she turned toward the hut, when, advancing close to the spot, she beheld Tuscarora himself ; and she could see, by the light glimmering from the cabin, that his wampum belt was widened, and passed in double folds over his heart. She could see, too, where the blood had streamed over his deer-skin robe.

“ Welcome, brave Tuscarora !” she said, a glow of gratitude warming her chilled heart. “ Thanks be to God, that your life is spared ! I feared it was sacrificed for me.”

“ Had the sacrifice been needed, it should not have been withheld,” answered the Indian, leaning on his rifle, which he now grasped in his left hand. “ The God of Christians has

watched over us both, my sister. For a few moments the heart of the strong was weak from the flowing blood, but my learned brother," looking at Aristides, "stanch'd it with the hand of skill, and the wound bleeds no more."

"I fear you suffer still," said Linda. "It is not the first time that noble hand has been dyed in blood for me. Oh!" she added, in a tone of bitter anguish, "I seem born to give sorrow and trouble to all who love me, to drag them to the threshold of death."

"Say not so, dear Linda," said Robert, on whose arm she leaned, scarcely able to sustain her exhausted frame; "we are all willing to die in your defence, but it is your enemy who is fallen—your friends are spared."

"I am grateful," she answered, faintly; "but it is dreadful to be the cause of bloodshed, strife, and death."

"I did not wish to slay," cried the Indian, solemnly; "the Mighty Spirit, who sees my heart, knows it is innocent of the blood of the white man. But it is time that we leave this accursed spot. The damps of midnight will injure your sister's health. We must prepare a way for her return."

"I will carry her," cried Robert: "as I alone am able, the office devolves on me."

"My young brother forgets the wound from which he has so lately suffered," said Tuscarora, leaning more heavily on his rifle. "It is a weary path through the woods."

"I can walk," said Linda. "I am strong; and when weary, I can sit down and rest."

But even as she spoke, her limbs bent under her, and she would have fallen, had it not been for the supporting arm of Robert.

"Let my learned brother go to the cabin, and bring thence a chair, and a deer-skin, which lies upon the bed," said Tuscarora; "we will make a carriage which Lapio and Cæsar can carry, while we walk before and bear the torches. It is good."

"Oh, yes!" cried Linda, inexpressibly relieved; for every

moment added to her conviction that she had not strength to walk, and she could not think of suffering Robert to carry her such a weary distance. The strong arm of Tuscarora was weak, or he would never thus have bowed his upright form, and Aristides was already overcome with fatigue.

While Aristides went for the chair, and the negroes, emboldened by his presence, rekindled the torches at the haunted hearth, Robert insisted on conveying her in safety over the stream.

"If Roland were here, I should not be such a burden to others," said Linda, dejectedly, as they crossed the dark ravine, while the gurgling waters seemed to murmur, "murder—murder," in her excited ear; "but in his absence, to whom should I turn but to thee, Robert, my brother and my friend?"

"To whom, indeed, Linda!" repeated he, involuntarily drawing her closer to him. "Repine not, that I am permitted to act as his representative, since in so doing I am but redeeming a pledge given to him before his departure. In joy and safety you need me not, Linda. Refuse not, then, in the hour of darkness and danger, my guardian arm, my protecting care."

"Refuse, Robert! do I not cling to you as my safeguard and my strength? But say not that it is only in danger's hour I turn to you. There is no joy your friendship cannot heighten, as there is no sorrow your sympathy could not relieve."

Robert sighed.

"You are weary even now," she said, anxiously, "but in a few steps you will touch the opposite bank. How the plank trembles beneath us!"

She gave one backward glance to the haunted hut, and Robert felt the vibration of terror that shook her frame.

"He will never harm thee more, Linda."

"I thought not of myself. But will *he* be left unburied there?"

"Think not of him. Leave every thing connected with this dark transaction to Tuscarora and myself. Nothing shall be neglected which Christian duty requires."

"But will not he, the generous Tuscarora, suffer? Will he not be arraigned as a murderer, just and righteous as was the deed?"

"Fear not, Linda. With far less provocation, he would be acquitted of the shadow of blame. No, believe me, the noble Indian cannot, will not, suffer for an act justified by the laws of self-preservation, as well as justice."

Comforted by this earnest assurance, Linda yielded herself gratefully to her novel conveyance, the fur-covered chair; and so gently and carefully was she carried along, that her weary eyes closed in a light slumber before she arrived at the gates of Rosavilla.

It is scarcely necessary to say that Robert's declaration was verified with regard to the safety of Tuscarora; but Linda never knew how much he suffered from his wounded side; or how, when he reached his cabin, he fell prostrate across the threshold from pain and exhaustion. The morning found him up and girded for the events of the day; "The son of the wilderness scorns to complain."

CHAPTER XIV.

"AND must you leave us so soon, my brother?"

Weeks had passed since the terrible scenes recorded in the last chapter, when Linda uttered these words, rather as a melancholy assertion, than as a question requiring an affirmation. "Must you indeed leave us? Ah, how closely joy and sorrow are allied! Yesterday, the tidings of Roland's safe arrival, his triumphant success, and the prospect of his

speedy return, filled me with unutterable joy. To-day, you receive summons to depart. Roland will come back, and you will not be here, that he may thank and bless you for being our guardian and our protector. I knew that you could not remain; that sacred duties must call you from us; but are we ever prepared to give up ‘the society of the friend we love?’ Oh, never!”

“I have been expecting the summons,” answered Robert, “and I ought to rejoice: for the bread of heaven must be earned, not alone by the toiling limb and the delving hand, but in the heat and burden of the day of religious labour. I have been idle too long. The sinews of my spirit are relaxed. Better, far better, Linda, the girdle of sackcloth than the folding of down for the pilgrim of life.”

“You have not been idle, Robert. You have been diffusing blessings on all. You have been indispensable to our happiness, our security, and our peace. I know I ought not to repine; but I cannot be reconciled to your departure. My hold on earthly treasures seems less and less secure. We have had such a thrilling lesson of the uncertainty of life! It seems as if every golden link of love hangs loosely in the chain, that once appeared of iron strength. A little while ago, I thought death only could rob me of my boy; yet who could think of death, that looked on his bright and rosy infancy? And yet I tremble, even now. One moment he was sporting in the sunbeams—the next in a ruffian’s hands! And I, how securely I sat, in this very room, in the bosom of home, little dreaming that a demon was waiting at my own door to plunge me into unimaginable horrors. That dreadful night!—the lonely hut!—the exulting villain!—the cleaving weapon!—the bleeding body! O God! I never, never shall forget them!”

Pale and shuddering, she covered her face with her hands, to shut out the horrible images that night after night haunted her pillow, and whose daily recollection unsheathed her nerves, and made them thrill with agony.

"You promised to forget all these, Linda," said Robert, in soothing accents, "or to remember the past only as an altar of gratitude and praise. The more awful the danger, the more sublime the deliverance."

"I know it, Robert; and, next to God, I owe my deliverance to you."

"Not to me. You forget the brave Indian who so nobly avenged you. His unerring instinct guided us in the path to your rescue. His arm of strength burst open your prison-doors, and laid the villain low."

"I feel all that I owe him, Robert; but I saw no one but you rushing to save me in my soul's extremity. It was you who carried me from the scene of blood and strife. It was you whose prayers were the wings of my fainting spirit, and who stood to me in the place of the absent Roland. What I owe to him—the brave, the noble, the gallant Tuscarora—I never can repay. What I owe to you, Robert?"—

"Speak not of gratitude to me, beloved sister! it wounds—it oppresses me. You owe me nothing—altogether nothing! Exalt not my services to your husband, I pray you. Let them be forgotten in Tuscarora's superior claims; in Aristides Longwood's equal, if not greater, exertions. If you knew, Linda, how your gratitude humbled me!"

"Then I will hide it in my heart. But I owe you one debt, which I must acknowledge. You have brought me nearer the kingdom of heaven by your precepts and example. Your holy conversation has fallen like the dew of Hermon on every Christian grace, and revived their languishing bloom. They had been melting in the unclouded sunshine of my happy home. But your influence, our Julia's translation to heaven—for it did not seem like death,—the awful perils which I have escaped, have made me feel, as I have never done before, my dependence on my Saviour and my God. Think of me when you are gone, Robert. Remember me in every prayer you wing on high. The eastern gales will come,

I know, fraught with the incense of devotion offered up for me and mine. As for me,—but you do not need my weak and trembling prayers, angel-strengthened as you are, clad in the armour of the gospel, and armed with the sword of the Spirit of God,—what can I do or ask for you?"

"Am I a hypocrite?" exclaimed Robert, with sudden vehemence, rising and walking to the window, while a dark cloud swept over his countenance. "Have I ever lifted myself above human frailties and passions, that you thus set me apart from sympathy and prayer? Have I enthroned myself on a mount of holiness, high above the storms and temptations of the valley of life? Where are the strengthening angels that surround me? Where is the flaming sword of the Spirit? The armour of the gospel of peace?"

Linda gazed at Robert in distress and alarm. There was something so strange, so unaccountable in the vehemence, the wildness of his manner, she feared his reason was forsaking him. What could she have said to cause such violent, such mysterious agitation? He who was usually so gentle and self-possessed, now seemed transformed to the impassioned, impetuous Robert of other days.

"Have I made you angry, dear brother?" she asked, in a tone of such deep distress, it brought him immediately to her side. His face was very pale, but it was calm, unruffled as a tablet of marble.

"No, Linda; forgive me, forgive my unpardonable vehemence. If you knew the horror I feel at the thought of hypocrisy! Knowing so fully, deplored so deeply my own weakness, your too exalted praises fall like burning coals on my naked soul. It writhes in agony of humiliation."

The language of Robert may seem exaggerated to some,—it certainly did to Linda, though she did not doubt its sincerity; but she knew not the inner warfare that was wasting his heart's blood on its secret battle-ground.

Destiny seemed to have placed him in a position requiring

the strength of an archangel, and he was but mortal. He had thought himself strong after the night when, like Jacob, he wrestled and prevailed, when he had resolved to sacrifice his freedom as a safeguard from temptation's power. But the thrilling circumstance in which they had been recently placed, and which had brought them in more intimate communion; the danger which she had incurred, and which had thrown her on his immediate guardianship; her ardent gratitude and confiding affection, her unlimited trust in his excellence and piety, her guileless and endearing manners, her unsuspecting reliance on his brotherly attachment—were all as so many waves pressing with resistless and accumulating force against the wall, the impassable wall that separated him from her. He could feel it vibrating, shaking, as he leaned against it for support, and there were moments when, like Samson, his spirit was tempted to bow itself blindingly, despairingly, bringing down the mighty pillars of Christian faith, and crushing itself in the ruins it made.

Yes! He rejoiced that oceans would roll and mountains rise between them; rejoiced to think he was required to make an immediate departure. He was summoned to attend the general conference; then business demanded his presence at Pine Grove, preparatory to his departure for India. He was to resume his missionary labours, to which he was resolved to devote his future life. For a little while he had contemplated a different sphere of duty, but God had not willed it should be so. The path was now as plain before him as the track of the sun in the burning circle of the zodiac.

"You will take me back to my father's," said Nora, whose softened heart yearned for her early home.

"And leave me desolate," said Linda, reproachfully. "Wait, at least, till Roland comes. He will provide a way for your return. Or wait a little longer,—you know I have promised to visit you in the spring."

"I cannot remain till then," answered Nora, blushing; "but

I will not leave you till Captain Lee arrives, since you think I keep you from desolation. I should like to meet his sunny smile once more. Do you know, Linda," with a flash of her wonted levity, "I have some hopes of being his second wife!"

Linda smiled, but even Nora's kindling vivacity could not remove the cloud of sadness caused by Robert's approaching departure. She expressed her sorrow openly. He repressed his, and she thought him almost cold. He was to go by morning light, and when they parted at night, she said, attempting to smile, "You shall not cheat me, as Roland did. I shall rise before to-morrow's sun, to bid you farewell."

"Why should we wish to say so sad a word, Linda?"

"Though sad in the utterance, it is precious in remembrance."

"Is it even so? Then let it be to-night. I shall not wait for the dawning. Farewell, Linda; dear, beloved sister, farewell! Believe the blessings I would, but cannot utter."

He clasped her one moment in a hurried embrace, and turned hastily to the door.

"Oh, Robert!" cried the weeping Linda; "is this indeed a last farewell? Shall we not meet again, my brother? Even in this world, shall we not meet again?"

"Yes, we shall meet again, Linda," said he, drawing his hand from hers, and raising it to heaven. "Let me go, my sister; 'tis but a little while."

He left her; he closed the door that he might shut out the sobs of her unrepressed sorrow. He hurried through the hall with a quick, agitated tread, fearful lest she might call him back, and upbraid him for the brevity and coldness of his last farewell. Just as he was entering his chamber, he glanced toward the door in which he had for the last time beheld the living Julia, looking back upon him, as it were, from the threshold of the tomb, with a diadem of light encircling her, emblematical of the crown of glory now doubtless enwreathing her brows. She seemed to stand there still, smiling with im-

mortal love, for all the rays of the silver lamp-light gathered in a focus round the image pictured there.

"Oh, my God, I thank thee!" he exclaimed, sinking on his knees, in the solitude of his chamber: "thine is the victory, and thine be the glory. It is over—the conflict, the agony—and thou hast not forsaken me. Henceforth I consecrate myself anew, body and soul, to thy service. The smoke of the sacrifice is passing away, and the flame rises pure and bright toward heaven."

CHAPTER XV.

WE now return to Roland Lee, who, having rescued, by the most persevering efforts, his benefactor from bankruptcy and ruin, has embarked in the noble ship *Eagle*,—one of the most magnificent vessels that ever crossed the Atlantic.

Roland's heart glowed with the consciousness of successful exertion. He was repaid for the sacrifice he had made, in a measure, to cancel a debt of gratitude, and now, as he traversed the deck, knowing that every wave over which he floated was bearing him homeward, and lessening the distance that separated him from his wife and child, he felt as a true son of ocean feels when given up to its boundlessness and grandeur.

Never did a vessel leave port under more auspicious omens. Propitious winds swelled the sails, and the resplendent sunshine seemed reflected from billows of glass. When Roland left New Orleans, he had chosen a ship in preference to a steamer, that he might know something of a sailor's life. When he was a boy, he had imagined that if he served a good apprenticeship on boats, he would rise step by step, till he became master of a man-of-war; thinking a ship was only a larger, mightier boat,—built for the ocean's breadth and depth.

"Give me again the bird of the sun!" he cried, when preparing for his homeward voyage. "I love to see it spreading its white wings on the dark green waters. I love to hear the winds rushing among the shrouds, better than the howling pipe or the plunging engine. The Belle-Creole glides over the river with the grace of a goddess. The Eagle sweeps over the deep with the grandeur of a god."

It might be supposed that Roland would have chosen the speediest manner of crossing the ocean, in his impatience to be reunited to Linda. But every one knows the strong influence of early *passions*. His first passion was to go out into the "sea in a great ship." Filial affection had bound him to the home of a widowed mother, and a love still more powerful added to this, restrained his youthful desire. There was something in the mere aspect of a ship that inspired him, that sent the blood tingling through his veins: the lofty masts, the spreading sails, the myriad ropes—ladders for the gallant spirit—had a fascination for his eye; and the very thought of throwing himself on the wings of the wind, over the unfathomable deep, was sublime and glorious. Roland was born for a sailor, and though circumstances had prevented him from wedding the ocean, he felt, when placed as he now was,—far out of sight of land—committed to the power of two mighty elements,—that the sea was "*his home*, the bark was *his bride*." It was not that he loved Linda less—oh, no! The love of the sailor is the most chivalrous, exalted passion in the world. Woman is the polar star, shining on the deep of his soul, to which he turns with unwavering devotion. She is the load-stone attracting the steel of his spirit to the sanctities of home.

Among the passengers there was a young German woman, who frequently came on deck with a child in her arms, about the age of the little Walton. She seemed alone, without protection or friend—no companion but this little child. She would sit for hours gazing on the waters, her face turned to

the West, with a wistful, yearning expression, that awakened the sympathy of Roland. Her appearance was humble, but an air of modesty and refinement gave grace to her homely apparel. Though the child bore no personal resemblance to Walton, it was about the same age; it was fair and innocent, and unprotected save by a mother's love; and Roland never passed it without a yearning of the heart, and a tender remembrance of his own beautiful boy. He pitied the lonely young mother, and frequently relieved her of her maternal care, by taking the infant in his arms, and making it his companion as he walked the deck, and he held him up to catch the shrouds with his eager, dimpled hands. The child, whose name was Willie, grew so fond of him, that it would spring at the sound of his voice, and smile at the glance of his eye; and the humble, grateful mother felt in her loneliness that she had a protector near. She told him her history in a few words. Her husband left her about a year before, to seek his fortune in America. He was to send or return for her, as soon as he provided a means for their support. In the mean time her mother died, and she was left alone. With just money enough to pay her passage, she had started to join her husband in the New World, without knowing any thing of his locality—not knowing even if he lived. She asked Roland with great simplicity if he knew a German of the name of Stillings, in New York.

Though Robert knew nothing of her husband, he comforted her with the hope of finding him, and resolved to befriend her and her infant favourite, should they be left to desolation and want.

Every day, as it brought him nearer and nearer his native shores, increased his impatience to see his wife and child. Oh! that he had indeed the wings of an eagle, that he could rise on untiring pinions, and overcome with one broad sweep the apparently boundless waves! The winds were fair, but the gales were too slow for his restless wishes. Gladly now would

he have exchanged the wings of the wind for the burning breath of steam.

How near did home seem when the American shores heaved in sight ! With what thrilling emotions he caught the first glimpse of the Canadian coast ! During the day a light wind had been floating, which changed near sunset to a strong southerly gale. Dark, steel-coloured clouds scudded on the verge of the western horizon, but the sun shone out at its setting with a burst of splendour, that changed every leaden cloud into a mountain of burning gold. The sea was one bed of foam, whose white, feathery surface grew ruddy in the sunset blaze ; and the mist rising from the foam of the waves looked like golden gauze hanging over the bosom of the deep. Sunbeams sparkling on this dust of the ocean, converted it into the most magnificent drapery imagination can conceive. The ship seemed drifting on through an atmosphere of glory, with a speed that equalled Roland's ardent wishes. Exalted by the wondrous splendour and grandeur of the scene, he stood upon deck, baring his forehead to the mighty ocean gale. All that he had ever conceived of the sublimity of the sea was now realized. But it was only a flash of glory that vanished with the setting sun. The golden mountains were again transformed to a dark undulation of clouds, and the sparkling gossamer to a dull, grayish mist. The gale grew stronger and stronger, swelling at length into such stormy gusts, that the sailors were ordered to reef the sails, and the sound of the silver pipe, calling the hands together, was heard more than once.

They were not far from the southern coast of Newfoundland, and the wind, which had suddenly changed to an easterly blast, came roaring behind them with tremendous force. If, a few hours before, Roland had realized all he had ever conceived of the magnificence of ocean, he now experienced its terror and its might.

He did not apprehend any danger, for it was something of which he never thought of; but he knew the captain was pre-

paring for a stormy night, for his trumpet voice was heard high above the roaring waves, in tones of unusual authority and decision. He knew that near the point they were approaching many a noble vessel had been wrecked, and that it was a fearful thing when man had to battle with the elements' wrath.

"This is rough business, Joe," he heard one sailor call out to another, on the hatchway. "What do you think of it?"

"Just what might be expected. We started on a Friday. Bad luck to the ship that does it!"

Roland could not forbear smiling at the superstition expressed in these words, though the wild rocking of the ship, the howling of the wind through the shrouds, and the scowling aspect of the heavens convinced him that it was not a time for careless insecurity. He folded his arms involuntarily over his breast, as if to shield the beauteous image enshrined there from the fury of the coming tempest. Lifting to heaven his darkened eyes, he breathed a silent prayer to the God of the mariner to gather the winds in the hollow of his hand, and spare the home-bound bark. Steadying himself against the mainmast, he watched the travail of the deep, that seethed and boiled like a mighty cauldron, while the vessel strained its giant sides, and tossed upon the billows in throes that threatened to rend every cord and rope asunder.

The moon, now verging toward the full, suddenly burst forth above the black cloud-rocks, making them appear of tenfold blackness, and revealing in all their horrors the yawning abyss of the ocean. All at once the vessel, that went plunging from billow to billow, like a frantic war-steed amid the war and strife of battle, was thrown with a tremendous concussion into the trough of the sea, making a terrific rift, starting the sternpost, and tearing away the rudder.

From this moment indescribable confusion and horror reigned. The cry—"a rift, a rift! a leak, a leak!" was answered by the hurrying and rushing of feet, the working of

the pumps, the firing of the minute-gun, the hoarse oaths of the men, and the shrieks of women and children, crowding the hatchway and clinging to the spars. But all these frightful and discordant sounds were almost drowned in the multitudinous voice of the angry breakers, dashing against the groaning vessel, and throwing over it a cloud of drenching, blinding spray. Faster than the pumps laboured, poured into the leak the rushing sea. The gallant vessel *must* sink, and they who would not go down with her must seek safety in the lowering boats.

The poor German woman, clasping her child frantically to her bosom, threw herself wildly at Roland's feet, praying him, for God's sake, to save them. Even in that moment of agony, when every mountain wave that dashed against them threatened to overwhelm and destroy, when Roland beheld a watery grave before him, instead of the home of love and joy to which his longing spirit turned, he was not insensible to the claims of compassion. He raised the weeping mother, and taking little Willie from her trembling arms, promised to protect them while life lasted.

"Save yourself," cried the captain, to Roland: "the long-boat is gone. The yawl is lowering. Save yourself, for, by the eternal God! I believe this is your last chance."

"And you, sir," said Roland, struck with the stern, resolved, and heroic expression of his countenance, and involuntarily grasping his hand with a pressure of steel.

"I stay by my ship to the last!" he exclaimed; "but save yourself. The next breaker will sweep over the deck, as sure as eternity is ready to engulf you."

Roland was about to say—"I will not leave you—I will share your fate, whatever it be;" but the thought of Linda, of his child, stifled the declaration. He seemed to see her on the thundering breakers, stretching out her imploring arms, and entreating him to save himself, for the love of God and her.

"Linda, Linda," he exclaimed, as if answering her wild,

heart-rending appeal, "wait one moment, oh, my beloved,—next to these, these helpless ones,—I come."

Seizing the rope, which the captain had thrown him, he wound it round the waist of the almost fainting woman, and let her down into the boat just as it had heaved up on a giant billow, then tossing the child into the arms of a sailor, he was about to leap from the deck; but seeing the boat was already full, incapable of containing another, without endangering those who had crowded into it for safety, he stopped, and the rocking ship sent him reeling against the mast.

"Down with the pinnace," shouted the captain, in a voice of thunder: "one more chance of salvation. Great God! 'tis too late. No. Quick! in with you before those craven wretches. Back," he cried, waving his hand commandingly to the sailors, who were rushing over each other to reach the boat, "back, till *he* is safe, or I'll scatter your brains to the four winds of heaven."

Roland laid his hand on his, with a restraining gesture.

"Let them go, their lives are as dear to them as mine to me. Almighty Father! they have gone down."

As he spoke, the pinnace was sucked in by a roaring vortex, and the bubbling cries of the drowning mingled with the horrid din of the breakers, and the wailings and shrieks of the tempestuous gust. Roland was a noble swimmer, and he would have plunged into the ocean at once; but man could no more have breasted those mountain waves than have called them into existence. Wrathful whirlpools were boiling and foaming as if subterranean fire were bursting beneath.

The black-rifted clouds which had a few moments before opened, that the moon might look down in pity on the awful scene, now suddenly closed; but its silver rays, ere they were curtained by darkness, played on Roland's pale, uplifted brow. They seemed to linger momentarily round that gallant form, as if loath to yield it to the whelming billows.

"Here, here," cried the captain, suddenly emerging from

the hatchway, where he had disappeared a moment before—and his voice sounded hoarse and strange in the roaring tempest; “take this rope, and lash yourself to that broken spar. Here is another for me. Dead, if not alive, we’ll be drifted ashore. God help you! There, make it fast.”

At the time he was speaking, he was lashing himself to a broken spar, and Roland instantaneously followed his example. It was the last, the only chance of safety. He thanked the brave captain, and committed himself to Him who maketh the waves his chariot, and rideth on the wings of the wind.

“Oh, Linda,” he cried, from the innermost depths of his soul, stretching out his arms as if to clasp her in a last embrace; “oh, my beloved, thou comest between me and my God. My thoughts should only be of heaven—my hopes clinging to a Saviour’s cross; but thou—thou, too dearly loved”—

A crash, loud and terrific, as if the heavens were rent asunder,—a shock like the earthquake’s throes! The noble ship is dashed against a rock, and the sea rolling in thundering billows over its mangled corse. Nothing is heard but the howling of the tempest—the roaring of the breakers—the thunders of the surge; nothing seen but a blackened sky, a dark, wild, terrific waste of waters, and a dim glimpse of the wrecked and shattered Eagle.

CHAPTER XVI.

WE will not attempt to describe the unutterable grief, the agony of Linda, when the papers brought the tidings which made her heart a grave—her home a wilderness. Yet she clung wildly to the hope of Roland’s escape. Though his name was on the list of the lost, she would not, could not be-

lieve that he had perished. He lived, he still lived for her. He had been drifted to some unknown coast—some ocean isle. Heaven would restore him to her arms—the husband of her youth, the father of her child—the young, the noble, the gallant Roland.

Her mind, jarred by the suddenness of the shock, conceived the wildest designs. She would go herself to the terrible catastrophe, and search among the wave-washed ruins for the body of her husband. Never, never would she be convinced of the mournful fact till she had seen on his manly brow the signet seal of death.

“I will go, *Oh, uxor infelicissima*; Oh, most unhappy wife,” said the grieved and sympathizing Aristides. “The Lord, who turned the waters of the Red Sea into walls of glass, so that the children of Israel could walk over on dry land, has still command over the angry billows; he will have compassion on thee, *filia dolorosa*—Oh, daughter most mournful; ‘for like as a father pitieith his children, even so the Lord pitieith those who fear him,’ as the Psalmist piously exclaims.”

“Yes! our learned brother shall go, while I stay to guard the dove, whose plumage is shattered by the storm,” said Tuscarora, pierced to the soul by the sight of her inconsolable anguish.

“And I will stay to weep with her, for I know not how to comfort,” cried Nora, encircling with her arms the weeping Linda, and pressing her pallid cheek with the tenderest, gentlest sympathy. Nora was a comforter. The treasures of her heart were unlocked by sorrow and love, and it was astonishing what riches were discovered there. The enchanted cavern of the genii scarcely contained more inexhaustible gems.

The following letter from Robert to Linda, written some time after, gives all the particulars he had himself gathered of the fate of Roland. It will be seen that he had anticipated

the mission of Aristides, and that Linda was spared hereafter the agony of suspense:

MY BELOVED SISTER:

"If you were not a Christian, I should not dare to address you at a moment like this. Earth has no consolation for a sorrow like yours. Heaven alone can comfort,—God alone sustain. I have just returned from the saddest pilgrimage man ever accomplished. Oh, Linda, you have not, you cannot have cherished hope; yet it was that which led me to the place where God manifested himself in such majesty and power. Better is the certainty of evil than the tortures of suspense. We dare not wrestle with the angel of Providence. I see you kneeling in agony, but submission,—yielding your bleeding heart to the smiting hand. I see you drowned in tears; but your eyes are lifted to heaven. 'It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth good in his sight,' comes struggling up from the depth of your stricken spirit. 'He hath given—he hath taken,' and he will again restore.

"But cold sounds even the language of inspiration, when it falls from human lips. Could I see you—but I could not look upon your grief. I had not dared, Linda, to have intruded on the sacredness of your sorrow, even with one word of sympathy, knowing it must be unavailing; but I told you I had been on a mournful pilgrimage. You are prepared for the result,—a confirmation of your unutterable loss. But there is comfort even in our darkest woes. The relenting billows gave back the noble form, wrapped for a while in their cold embrace. It was cast upon the rocky and barren coast, and the rugged fishermen wept when they beheld so fair a ruin. They made a grave for the stranger on the wave-washed shore; but he sleeps not there, beloved sister. I brought with me the sacred relics, and have committed them to the care of the faithful Aristides, whom I met on my return. Perhaps they have already arrived, and are embalmed

even now by the holy tears and sighs of wedded sorrow. Oh, who would not be willing to die to be thus lamented, thus consecrated by memory, thus immortalized by love!

"Could the life of him you loved been redeemed by mine, how gladly would I have sacrificed it, to save you the anguish you now endure. I, the lonely and unconnected—who would mourn for me? No severed affections would bleed over my ashes. No blossoms of love be blasted by my doom. Would to God, Linda, I had died for Roland! Would to God I had died for thee!

"There is one circumstance I must relate, for it belongs to the memory of Roland, and consecrates it with the honours of a martyr's doom.

"There is a poor German woman whom I took under my protection, who, with her infant, a child of twelve months, was saved from the wreck by him a few moments before the destruction of the vessel. He might have saved himself; the captain was urging him with generous zeal to leap into the boat, the only boat which reached the shore, but he refused till they, that poor woman and helpless babe, were rescued. He let her down with his own hands—herself and her child. His last act was one of self-sacrificing, heroic benevolence. In imitation of his divine Master, he died that others might live. Oh, my sister, is it not glorious thus to die?

"The woman and child, who have become precious by the costly price paid for their preservation, are now in New York, where she has gone in search of her husband. I gave her your direction, that if in want or sorrow, she might apply to you. I also enclosed hers to you, unknown to herself. Have I not anticipated your heart's wishes? One thing more, Linda, and I have done. I approach the subject with a trembling hand; a miniature of yourself was found on the lifeless bosom, devoted in life, faithful in death to you. The fisherman who found it gave it to my keeping, and I thus identified the body of my friend. I have dared to keep it as a memento of

both. If you demand it, as something too hallowed, by the awful circumstances in which it was discovered, to belong to any but yourself, it shall be immediately restored, as it is now religiously guarded. But if you are silent, I will carry it with me to my missionary home, as a memorial of your friendship and sisterly love. Pure as the incense of my morning and evening sacrifice shall be the memories clustering round this precious image. No thought which angels might not sanction shall agitate the heart that now throbs beneath it. It shall be a talisman from temptation, a pledge, that though dedicated to heaven, there is one link, pure and holy, that still binds me to earth.

"And now, Linda, beloved sister of my heart, farewell! Forgive the tear that blots that sad, sad word. When time shall have softened the bitterness of your grief, and you can spare one thought from the grave of Roland, remember him whose prayers will daily rise to God for you, beyond the Indian seas. I will write again, if my solitary life is prolonged. But if this is the last token you can receive from your brother and your friend, if I am doomed to sleep in the unfathomable caves of ocean, or to make my last bed in the tropic groves of Hindostan, mourn me not, for sweet will be the rest found beneath the winding waters or the burying sod. To time, the great consoler—religion, the Divine comforter—to a guardian God, a pitying Saviour, a holy, healing Spirit, I commit thee, in the heavenly hope of a blessed reunion.

ROBERT."

We will now draw a veil over the shades of Rosavilla, leaving its mourning mistress to "Time, the great consoler," to "Religion, the divine comforter." Emily Carlton hastened to her friend as soon as she heard the sad history of Roland's death; and Nora, who had been a ministering spirit in Linda's darkened home, returned to her father's house. Not very long was she permitted to remain there, for Henry, true to his

plighted vows, came back, in the springtime of the North, to claim his blooming Southern bride.

If Henry had been captivated by Nora, in all her wild levity and unchastened spirits, how much more charming did he find her now, since the discipline of life had subdued the exuberance of animal gayety, and love had not only softened, but exalted her character? He feared at first she had lost a little too much of her original sparkling brightness; but when he saw her, the cynosure of his Northern home, in the midst of new and exciting scenes, glowing with happiness herself, and diffusing it around her—her spirits never effervescent too boisterously, or sinking too despondingly, occasionally flashing with the brilliancy of mirth, and always shining with the serene lustre of cheerfulness, he felt that she retained all the warmth and vitality and individuality he had so much admired, with the added graces of gentleness, sweetness, and womanly dependence. As she told Henry, the downy wings of Julia's heavenly spirit had first winnowed hers, and the golden grain began to gleam from the chaff that had enveloped it.

When Henry told his parents and sister that he should give them a daughter and sister in the stead of the departed Julia, they turned coldly from the communication, feeling as if it were sacrilege for the wild Southern girl to think of filling the place of the angel they had lost: but she found herself at home in their hearts before she knew she was there, and cherished with parental tenderness and love.

Henry had promised that her second winter should be passed at the South, but she was so enchanted with her first wintry season at the North, it seemed doubtful if she would remind him of his pledge.

"Beautiful," she would say, "is my own summer home, and beautiful beyond description are the evergreen bowers of Rosavilla; but give me the exhilarating climate, the drifting snows and glittering ice of the North. I feel surrounded by elements that I love, for, strange as it may seem, the colder

the atmosphere the warmer my heart, and the lighter my spirits.

“O winter! ruler of th’ inverted year,
I crown thee king of intimate delights,
Fireside enjoyments, home-born happiness,’

as Cowper pertinently observes. Oh, matchless Aristides! when shall I listen to thy like again? Magnificent Tuscarora! lovely, incomparable Linda!”

“And noble, glorious Robert! would to heaven he would return,” exclaimed Henry, “and induce her to exchange the weeds of widowhood for the bridal robes!”

“Oh, Henry, she never will forget Roland—never love another. Men may love twice,” she said, with a glowing cheek, remembering she was the object of a second love, “but woman never.”

“Robert loved Linda before her marriage,” answered Henry, smiling at her emphatic *never*, “and she must have mourned over his early disappointment. Had Roland lived, she would have been true to her early love; but were Robert now with her, and did his youthful passion revive for her, she could not be insensible to his surpassing excellence. Strong as was her attachment to the young and gallant Roland, she may not yet know the depths of her unsounded heart. Robert is a man formed to inspire the most unbounded, most exalted love,—and once loved, he must be loved forever.”

“I do not think he has ever ceased to love Linda,” said Nora, thoughtfully. “He might worship Julia as an angel; but his heart never swerved from its first allegiance. I saw his struggles, but Linda never imagined them. She looked upon him as a saint, superior to human weakness and temptation.”

“I believe you are right, Nora. Julia was sealed from her birth as the bride of heaven—not intended for the ties of earth. Even my brotherly affection partook of worship. Had I been a Catholie, I should have adored her as an interceding divinity. But Linda, believe me, Nora,—were Robert

wafted back from India's distant clime,—Linda would love again. I wish I dared to write, and tell him so."

"No, Henry; Robert would shrink from the prophecy, as desecrating the sacredness of Roland's memory. Whatever he might feel himself, he could not bear to hear it from the lips of another. Besides, if he think it his duty to remain in India, even Linda could not draw him back to his native land. You speak of what *you* would do, if you were a Catholic. Had he been one, good heavens! what a devotee he would have made! The girdle of thorns, the bed of iron, would have been playthings to his self-scourging spirit!"

"Thank God," exclaimed Henry, "he is a Christian, whatever be his creed!"

CHAPTER XVII.

ANOTHER letter from Robert to Linda, written two years after the date of the one transcribed in the last chapter, may be more interesting to the reader than its contents related in the third person. During all this time he had continued his correspondence with Linda, but these two are the only ones we have the privilege of giving to the world:

"LINDA:

"I believed, when I bade you adieu, that our next meeting would be in that world where no curtain hides the mystery of the heart!—no seal closes the revealing lips! I believed that my feet would never more press my native soil!—my cheek never more be fanned by the breeze of the Western World! But God, the omnipotent disposer of the destinies of man, has opened a way for my return, as unexpected as it is mournful. Rayner, my spiritual father, my

Christian brother, my beloved friend,—the faithful and devoted missionary, is smitten by a wasting disease; and the physicians say his only hope of restoration is in inhaling the purer air of his native clime. While he had strength to labour, he resisted this advice, which, too late, I fear, he is willing to follow. First, his failing limbs refused to bear him to the temple of worship; then his eloquent lips began to falter, his heavenly eye waxed dim. But there is more eloquence now in his languishing countenance than in all the classics of Greece and Rome: for the glory of God shines forth from his faded features, and the Holy Spirit breathes from his weak and pallid lips. By his own request, I come the companion of his voyage, that I may minister to him as son, brother, friend. I return to my country—I return to you! The mighty hand of God draws us together once more, when I thought we were forever sundered. My heart swells with feelings too powerful for expression. All the thoughts born in years of exile, all that you have suffered, all that I have felt, are concentrated in this single moment! Oh, Linda, let us not meet in darkness and despair! Time has faded the cypress wreath. Hope renews the springtime of the heart.

“ROBERT.”

A short time after this letter reached its destination, the missionary ship arrived, and Robert pressed once more his native soil. His first care was to attend the invalid, Rayner, to the friends who were anxiously waiting his coming, and whose joyous welcome seemed to infuse new vitality in his languid veins;—his next, to visit Pine Grove, and see if all was well there, under the vigilant eye of the faithful and intelligent superintendent;—and then—and not till then—he turned his face to Rosavilla, the home of Linda—of Linda, no longer the wife of another!—no longer guarded by the flaming sword, from whose burning edge his heart had so often recoiled!

Yet he trembled more at the thought of approaching her in the sad twilight of her widowhood, than in the glowing sunshine of her wedded happiness. If he found her heart indeed buried in the grave of Roland, incapable of resurrection,—her life consecrated to his memory,—no cloistered nun should henceforth be more sacred from the vows of earthly love. He hardly knew how much he hoped, or how greatly he feared. He was resolved she should know him as he was, since honour no longer imposed disguise; and then, if she so willed it, he would exile himself forever from her presence.

How his heart throbbed when he saw the white walls of Rosavilla gleaming through the luxuriant foliage of early summer!—when he saw the polished leaves of the tall magnolias glittering in the silver moonlight, and inhaled the odour of their magnificent blossoms! It was night when he arrived two years and a half ago; it was night now. He was glad, for his feelings wanted a mantle of shadows to veil their tumult. He shrunk from the moonlight, as if it could fathom the mystery of his emotions.

As he ascended the path which wound from the river to the mansion-house, he caught a glimpse of a tall, white pillar, rising in the midst of a green enclosure, separated from the garden, and surrounded by a hedge of jessamines and roses. The air was embalmed by their fragrance, damp as it was with the dew of night.

Robert paused, and leaning against an iron railing that encircled the hedge, he gazed on the obelisk, reflecting so dazzlingly the white lustre of the night. It recalled to his mind his return to his own home from his first exile; his visit to his mother's tomb; and all that had occurred since that remembered hour. He thought of Julia, whom he then first beheld in her fair, ethereal loveliness, now sleeping beneath a cold, white monument far away, but on which the same moon-beams were shining.

“Oh, Death! Death!” he murmured, lifting his hat rever-

rently from his brow, as he stood before this memorial of its awful power, "in thy cold and sublime presence the eagerness of hope subsides, the throbs of passion are stilled. Brave and noble Roland! thou didst fall in the dew of youth—the brightness of thy manhood. Thou art worthy of every tear that embalms thy memory. I will not rob thee of one precious tribute. My hands shall assist in twining the garlands that adorn your tomb."

With slow steps he turned again into the path, looking back on the marble which had so tranquilized the tumult of his bosom. A beautiful figure of Hope leaning on an anchor, surmounted a lofty pedestal, on whose sides were represented, in bas-relief, different views of the ocean. The one which Robert could now see was descriptive of his fate. The dashing billows, the sinking vessel, the fatal rocks, were all visible. On a pillar, rising behind the statue, the massy coils of a cable rope were defined, and so exquisite was the carving, the marble seemed to feel the strain of the twisting cordage.

This silent monitor had breathed a religious calm into Robert's soul. He threaded the winding avenues of the garden, ascended the flight of steps that led to the verandah, and saw the lamps shining through the clustering vines, now half concealing the windows with their summer bloom. They were all open, to admit the evening breeze, and Robert, pushing aside the green drapery and transparent lace, paused one moment ere he entered, for a sudden dimness came over his sight, and the roaring of many waters seemed thundering in his ears.

Linda sat, not as she did when he first returned from India, half enclosed in her husband's arms, with the soft glow of love on her cheek, and its enchanting smile curling the roses of her lips. She sat alone by the table, on which books and work were scattered, but her hands were folded, and her eyes cast down in deep, musing thought. A black dress of transparent tissue, corresponding to the warmth of the season, formed

such a contrast to the pearly fairness of her complexion, she looked scarcely less white than the marble on which he had just been gazing. Not the faintest tint of colour glowed on her cheek, and the shade of the long lashes that rested upon it was pensive as the drooping of the willow's weeping boughs.

Robert had pictured her to himself clad in the weeds of widowhood, shrouded in the twilight of memory, but not as he now beheld her. There was something in her look and attitude that seemed to say, "There is no second spring-time to the heart."

Not with another secret glance would he intrude on her pensive reverie; he would not even enter unannounced, as he had done before. He stepped to the door and rang the bell, that she might be prepared for his approach,—such a sacredness now invested her. He hardly expected to see that frozen form move at his entrance,—but the moment he crossed the threshold, the moment she heard the sound of his voice, she started from her seat, as if touched with an electric wire.

"Robert! Robert!" she exclaimed, springing to his arms with a cry that seemed to breath out her soul; "I am not then left all alone."

Gushing tears impeded her utterance, nor did she weep alone. Robert, as he clasped her in silence to his bosom, in an agony of love and sympathy, wept over *her*, and over the grave of his own hopes. They died at the first glance of her pale cheek and mourning robes, and he execrated himself for having nourished them.

"I came to comfort thee, my beloved Linda," said he, at length triumphing over his own agitation; and leading her to a seat he sat down by her, and tried to soothe her with all the tenderness of a brother. Gradually her tears ceased to flow; she looked in his face, and even smiled—a sad smile,—but there was so much welcome in it! His coming was like the coming of an angel to her, after the night of her sorrow and the gloom of their separation. She had wept for the ab-

sent Robert, as well as the departed Roland, and now, at the moment of greeting, the wound which time had been slowly healing opened to bleed anew.

"Are you indeed alone?" asked he. "Have you no female friend who cheers your solitude?"

"I have friends," she answered; "but none who could take your place, as brother, comforter,—as the friend of my soul. Nora, now happy in her Northern home, clung to me with a sister's devotion. Emily remained with me long. Mrs. Revere, too, has been with me, lavishing on me more than maternal kindness,—and through all, the German woman, whose direction you gave me, has been a companion and a friend. She, with her little Willie, have long been inmates of my household. No, dear Robert," she added, regarding him with a look of earnest gratitude and feeling, "I am not alone; but now you have come, it seems, in comparison, that I have been all solitary before. And my boy—my darling, my beautiful, my good little Walton—he is spared to me. Come with me and look at him. See, how lovely he is in sleep!"

Lifting a gauzy curtain, that floated in the doorway between the two apartments, she led the way to the couch of the sleeping Walton, and holding the lamp above him, displayed his cherub face to Robert's bending glance.

"How much he is like Roland!" she said, pressing her quivering lips to the child's snowy forehead; "he has the same noble brow—the same beautiful smile. Do you not think so, Robert?"

"I do see a resemblance," he answered, laying his hand gently on its silken curls, "and I trust its father's manly virtues may live again in him."

He was glad that Linda talked of Roland. The unspoken name has the strongest spell, and the unuttered sorrow dries up the heart.

Thus Robert found himself domesticated once more under the same roof with Linda; and as day after day passed by, the

hopes which he had thought annihilated asserted their vitality by a reviving glow. He could not help noticing, with inexpressible joy, her growing dependence on him for cheerfulness, if not happiness. Every morning, when she greeted him, it seemed that the soft shadow of her pensive countenance diminished; he even thought a faint blush sometimes dawned at his approach. They were thrown constantly together by the circumstances in which they were placed. Aristides was now a fixture in the household, and invested with the supervision of every thing requiring a master's eye. His fidelity and shrewdness were equalled only by his simplicity and learning. At this season he was much abroad on the plantation, and at night he usually pored over the classics of Greece and Rome.

Mrs. Stillings, the widowed German woman to whom Linda had given a life-long home, devoted herself with assiduity to household cares, while her little boy played among the flowers with the young Walton. So Linda walked with Robert in the orange bowers and rosy avenues, sat with him in the shaded verandah, or listened by the silver lamp-light, while he read the strains of genius and piety in a voice of thrilling music. Light had dawned on the night-shades of sorrow; and again and again she said—

“Oh! how lonely should I be without thee, my brother! what should I do deprived of the blessing of thy presence?”

And Robert dared not dispel this sweet confidence in his brotherly love, lest he should be left in utter darkness of heart, hopeless and alone.

At length he received a letter from Rayner, reminding him of his duties as a Christian missionary, mourning over his own waning health, which forbade the prospect of returning to the field of his labours, and committing to Robert the charge of the souls over which they had watched together, and for whom he, Rayner, had drained the oil of life's wasting lamp.

When Robert read this letter, he was sitting with Linda in

the parlour, as he was wont to do in the evening hour. She watched his countenance as he perused it, and her own turned of a paler hue, as she marked the agitation of his.

"What is it, Robert?" she asked, with indefinite apprehension, laying her hand on his arm as she spoke.

"Come with me into the verandah, and I will tell you," said he; and rising and taking her hand, he led her under the sweeping vines, out into the glorious moonlight, that made fairy checker-work on the white wall and ingrained flooring. It was not the same moon which had illumined his coming. A month had passed since then. They walked the whole length of the verandah without speaking, when, stopping by one of the pillars, all dripping with rose-wreaths, he exclaimed—

"I know not what is come over me. I cannot speak, though existence, or all that it involves, hangs trembling on this moment. I am called away, Linda; but before I go—"

"Oh, no, no, Robert, you are not going to leave me. Not going to leave me so soon," she cried; and covering her face with her handkerchief, she leaned against the pillar, while the rose-wreaths drooped over her brow.

"Linda," said he, and his voice faltered from intense emotion, "the time is come when I must speak or die. I rend asunder the chain which has so long bound my struggling heart, and gathering up the fragments, cast them trembling at your feet. Look upon me, Linda, not as a brother, not as a friend merely, but the lover of your youth—as one whose constant and unconquerable love has never known a shadow of a change. Impute it to me as a crime, if you will, that I could not quench the flame which I smothered in my bosom—that I could not forget you when I gave you to another. If it be a crime—and that I have deemed it one, let burning tears and rending sighs and midnight vigils testify—it is one I can no longer conceal. Honour no longer imposes silence, and friendship will forgive, if love refuses to sanction."

As he thus went on in a strain of impassioned eloquence,

as a stream which, having broken through a rocky barrier, sweeps resistlessly along, Linda threw both arms round the pillar against which she was leaning, and dropped her face, so that not a moonbeam glanced upon its snow. Her arms trembled, her bosom heaved, but she did not speak; she could not have spoken had death been the penalty of her silence.

"Let me go on," continued Robert, "till I have laid bare my whole soul, and then, if you will, I am forever silent. You remember how you pleaded another's cause, how you urged me to offer another my heart throbbing with undying love for you. I yielded to your prayers, but I never deceived her, never told Julia that I loved her. I asked her to place her spotless bosom before my erring heart, as a shield from temptation, and she consented; but God forbade the sacrifice, that he might glorify himself in my weakness. Say not that I was wrong to seek your presence, under the plea of brotherly affection. I thought I had conquered myself, I felt strong in the panoply of religion—strong and triumphant after years devoted to the service of my Saviour and my God. I resolved to fly, but I was urged to remain as your protector, as the guardian of your child. Could I refuse the sacred trust? I never betrayed it, Linda; you know I have been faithful, but God only knows through what bitter conflicts.

Again he paused, and Linda's trembling arms wrapped themselves closer round the supporting pillar. The vines still drooped over her face. He came nearer to her, and drew one of the white, unresisting hands from the pillar it twined. She did not attempt to withdraw it, and he felt it throbbing with ten thousand pulses.

"Oh, beloved Linda," said he, pressing that throbbing hand on his heart, whose beatings were audible in the moonlight stillness, "close not your heart to a love so constant and so true. I ask not for the passionate emotions of life's young dream; I ask you not to forget him whose memory should be immortal; but oh, Linda, think how young we both are yet—what long

years of happiness may be ours, if we now take each other by the hand, with chastened hopes and heavenward faces, as fellow pilgrims to an immortal goal. Turn, beloved of my soul, from that cold pillar to this warm, sustaining heart, or, if such be my doom, banish me at once to my lonely destiny."

At these words, Linda raised her head, and the moonlight fell full upon her face. It was of unearthly paleness, and her eyes looked like stars, in the tremulous depths of ocean.

"Oh, Robert!" she said, withdrawing her arms from the supporting pillar and turning toward him, "I did not dream of this—this all-enduring, matchless love. It overpowers, it drowns me. I cannot think, I cannot speak; I can only feel. Oh, if blighted as I am, so little worthy of such boundless devotion, you can prize so poor a gift, take me, Robert,—I am yours."

Before the last faltering word had left her lips, she was clasped in the arms, trembling on the heart of Robert. Closer and closer still he clasped her, as if he feared some invisible power would snatch her from his embrace. His lips, incapable of utterance, pressed on hers the glowing kiss of betrothed love. It was the first time he had ever dared to yield himself to the rushing tide of his impassioned emotions,—the first time that joy, pure, ecstatic joy, blended with the love so long interwoven with sorrow and remorse. The revulsion of his feelings was too powerful. He felt faint, dizzy, bewildered; something as the blind man feels, when the glory of sunshine first dawns on the long night of darkness.

It was not till seated by her, on one of the bamboo couches which formed a part of the verandah, how long afterward he knew not, that he realized the wondrous change those little words, "I am yours," had wrought in his destiny. Then a flood of gratitude to God, for having opened a vista through which years of happiness seemed rolling on in golden billows toward heaven, came sweeping over his soul. It prostrated him on his knees, and he could not help pouring out his joy-

burdened spirit into the bosom of his heavenly Father. And Linda knelt at his side, and these two betrothed beings, betrothed under circumstances of such peculiar solemnity, felt their souls mingling together in the incense of adoration and prayer.

"Ah! there is no end to the battle of life," said Robert, when, after returning to the house, he read aloud to Linda the letter of Rayner. "How can I ever think of asking you to sacrifice your country, home, and friends for me? How can I ever think of your being exposed to the influence of that sultry clime, which has wilted so many fragile blossoms of life?"

"What sacrifice shall I make if I go with you?" said Linda, her cheek glowing with the awakening enthusiasm of her feelings. "You, who will henceforth be to me, instead of country, home and all? Not here could I ever ratify the promise I have so lately breathed,—here, where every thing belongs to the past, and is associated with remembrances which might forever haunt me. Not here, Robert," she added, while the glow faded from her cheek, "could I bid the myrtle garland bloom again for me. I thought my heart was buried in yonder marble tomb. I dreamed not of hope, involved in the shadows of memory; but you came and awakened me from the torpor and gloom of chillness—the sleep resembling death. Your love, so sublime in its constancy, so glorious in its sacrifices, has a new creating power. A new heart seems throbbing in my bosom; new hopes are springing from the dust, and this new-born heart pants to share your higher, nobler destiny; pants to devote itself to the holy purposes to which you have dedicated yourself. I have seen and felt the vanity of earthly things. Oh, not for this life only, Robert, would I accept your noble heart. We are plighted for heaven, we will be wedded for eternity."

Linda, having made her unalterable decision to become the wife of a missionary, believing it the fulfilment of her peculiar destiny, seemed, as she had said, a new-created being. There was something in the strength, the grandeur of such love as

Robert's, that awoke congenial elements in her own character. A short time before, there seemed a mournful sweetness in dedicating her youth, her life, to the memory of the dead; now she was sustained by a more exalted purpose, that of devoting herself to the happiness of the living.

She wrote to Emily and to Mrs. Revere, whose friendship and sympathy had sustained and consoled her in her saddest, darkest hours. She wrote to Mr. Hunly, whose affection for Roland had endeared him greatly to her own heart. The splendid monument erected to his memory in Rosavilla's bowers was a memorial of his gratitude and sorrow. Nor did she forget Nora, who was now inexpressibly dear to her, and who deserved this proof of her confidence and love. To all these friends she told the history of her betrothal, and of the solemn pledge she had given to leave her native land for the missionary's distant home. She thanked them, with overflowing heart, for all their past kindness and sympathy, and entreated them to follow her with their prayers to India's sultry land.

While thus tenderly remembering her absent friends, she was not unmindful of those gathered round her. The grief of the household, when told of her intended departure, almost overpowered her. It was as intense as that which followed the enunciation of Roland's death. The affectionate negroes, to whom she had been the kindest and most indulgent mistress, were inconsolable at first, and nothing comforted them but the assurance that she would return, if God spared her life, to see them all once more. Aunt Judy, though she had an insurmountable dread of crossing the ocean, declared it her fixed determination to accompany her young mistress and the "blessed baby," as she still called the little Walton.

"Bless a Lord for his goodness," cried the faithful African; "I wouldn't part with my young mistress if I knew'd I'd be swallowed, like Jonas, in the mouth of a whale. I nursed her a baby in these arms. She went her own precious little born self, when she couldn't see her hand afore her, and the

wild beasts was a prowling in the woods, [Judy always would exaggerate the story of Linda's early heroism,] to get 'em to buy poor Judy, and save her from the old speculator. Oh, she's ben a heavenly young mistress, and I'll follow her to the eend of the universal world! Little did I think, when I fuss saw Masser Robert, I ever should look on him as the angel of a Lord he am now; that I should cry for joy 'cause Miss Lindy gonter marry him, tho he take her off nobody know how far. Won't she be a heap better off married to such a beautiful, lovingsome saint as he is, than crying out her eyes over a monument that don't know nothing 'bout it, bless a Lord?"

We might pursue Judy's soliloquy to an interminable length, for she thought of nothing else, talked of nothing else the livelong day. But there were others as deeply affected, and who would gladly have followed her likewise to the farthest regions of the globe.

The tender heart of Aristides was rent with anguish at the thought of parting with his beloved pupil, his adored benefactress, his constant friend; but he dared not murmur at what he firmly believed her God-directed destiny. To him she committed the guardianship of her temporal concerns, over which Mr. Hunly offered, moreover, to watch with fatherly interest. The grateful Mrs. Stillings was installed as housekeeper, in place of Aunt Judy, who had abdicated the throne she had herself assumed, to follow the fortunes of her mistress. The labours of the slave were now all labours of love, for, since her marriage, Linda had imposed no duties on her faithful old servant.

One sacred office she intrusted to Aristides, when no one was near to hear the parting injunction. She led him to the marble monument, whose white pillar, rising pure and lofty mid the gathering shades of twilight, was indeed emblematical of the memory of him whose spotless virtues triumphed over the shadows of time.

"To you, friend of my childhood," said she, "I leave the care of this holy shrine. Think not, because I go to minister to another altar, that I shall lose remembrance of this. Should I cease to cherish the memory of one so noble and so dear, I were unworthy of the love to which I have pledged my future life. Nourish every flower I have planted. Let every leaf be kept green; and brush away, with gentle hand, the dust that may gather here. My spirit, O Aristides! will often hover round thee, while fulfilling this holy duty."

"Sweet, *oh filia amata!* shall be the remembrance of this hallowed trust," answered Aristides, wiping away the starting tears. "The morning sunbeams and evening dews shall not more faithfully fulfil their mission here than I, mourner for the living as well as the dead. I will bring hither the flowers of spring and the roses of summer. Heaven will bend in pensive guardianship over the consecrated spot:

"And angels, with their silver wings, o'ershade
The ground, now sacred by his relics made,"—

as Pope pathetically remarks. But for me, *oh puella carissima!"*—

He turned away, unable to master his emotion at the thought of his coming desolation.

Tears stole down the dusky cheeks of Tuscarora—a rare tribute to Linda's wondrous power of inspiring intense regard.

"Poor are words to express the gratitude of the heart, noble Tuscarora!" said Linda, when she spoke to him of their approaching separation. "I owe you debts which never can be cancelled, but in every prayer wafted to heaven, beyond the Atlantic waves, my grateful soul shall draw down blessings on your head."

Tuscarora attempted to reply, then suddenly raised his hand to his brow, and left the room. He wandered for hours in the woods before he ventured to return to his cabin, for tears leave the stain of disgrace on the dark skin of the red man. Naimuna might weep, for she was a woman; Aristides might

weep, for he had the heart of a child; but the son of the forest must not weep, for he is the "stoic of the woods—the man without a tear!"

Passing over a chasm, which the imagination of the reader can supply, we turn to the scene when the young missionary, no longer alone, again departed from the Atlantic shores.

It was a bright and glorious morning, when a missionary ship was seen with spreading sails in the noble harbour of New York. A countless throng darkened the wharves, to look upon the departure of those whose vocation always invests them with peculiar interest. But a wondrous attraction now drew the eyes of the gazing multitude to the deck of the vessel, where two beings stood hand in hand, a young and bridal pair, ready to offer youth, beauty, wealth, and distinction on the altar of a crucified Redeemer.

And standing on their left, enhancing the interest of the scene, appeared a faithful daughter of Africa, holding in her arms a lovely boy of about three years of age—fair and innocent voyager to an unknown and far-off clime.

Yes; Linda stood on the deck of the vessel, the wedded wife of Robert Graham! The sable weeds of widowhood were exchanged for a robe of plain and spotless white. No ornament glittered on her person,—not even a bridal flower bloomed in the deep golden brown of her simply-parted locks. A holy lustre shone in her moistened eyes as she turned them, perhaps for the last time, on her native shores. And many an eye in that dense crowd wept as it rested on that young and beautiful pair, whose faces seemed, in the pure morning light, like the faces of angels.

There were some familiar forms, on which the missionaries looked down with yearning hearts, in this solemn, parting moment. Henry and Nora had come to the city to bid them farewell, and they were now mingled with the strangers who were gathered near the departing vessel. Nora wept unrestrainedly, and Henry, as he gazed on the princely lineaments

of his early friend, which so soon would vanish from his sight, felt in his inmost soul the power of that religion which could lift such a being above all earthly ambition, to be a candidate for immortal honours. Linda too—the young, the rich, the beautiful and beloved Linda. What a glorious offering to her Saviour's cause! Adoring angels might kneel to receive it, and bear it to the skies. She alone was worthy of Robert. Robert alone was worthy of her. They were both worthy of the crown of glory laid up for those who forsake all to follow the Redeemer's footsteps.

A band of Christians was gathered in the centre of the crowd to hallow, with the voice of praise and prayer, the parting hour. The aged minister, who was invested with the office of consecration, knelt down under the canopy of heaven, and with uncovered head, invoked the blessing of God on their mission. He commended them to Him whose breath stilled the dark-rolling waves of Galilee, and rebuked the stormy winds; who tempers the burning sun of India, and infuses a healing influence through its fair, but deadly clime.

Tears gushed from the eyes of the aged servant of God. There was a sublimity in the sacrifice before him, that, while it exalted his spirit, it melted his heart. He had consecrated many a pair for such holy labours, but never one like this kneeling before him. Tears gushed from beneath his silver eyelids. He could not go on, but bowing his head, remained in silent prayer.

The effect was indescribable. That kneeling throng,—the venerable minister, on whose white, bending locks the sun gleamed as on wintry snow,—and the two central figures, kneeling on deck, presented a scene of solemn beauty and religious grandeur.

And when they all rose once more, and the Christian band commenced the glorious missionary hymn, whose strains will roll down the tide of time as long as one shadow of pagan darkness lingers,—the swelling sails spread themselves like

wings to the breeze, and the ship slowly, majestically began to glide along the waters.

Sweet and grand were the strains that were wafted after the departing vessel.

“From Greenland’s icy mountains,
From India’s coral strand,
Where Afric’s sunny fountains
Roll down their golden sand,—
From many an ancient river,
From many a palmy plain,
They call us to deliver
The land from error’s chain.”

The voice of Robert was heard in unison with those, who, lingering on shore, sang, as if by inspiration, the magnificent lines ; but Linda’s lips were mute. At this moment she was thinking of all she was leaving behind. Her spirit was hovering over the marble monument in Rosavilla’s deserted shades. She looked down on the sea-green waves, and remembered whose winding-sheet they had been. The voices of the multitude sounded like the echoes of a far-off land ; the waters seemed dashing round a lone and barren isle.

She looked up to the heavens bending over them—the gorgeous pavilion of God’s love, and her spirit rose from the shadows of the past, and went out into the illimitable future. There was her home, high up in those boundless heavens, and every grave of earthly hope was but a stepping-stone to her Father’s mansion.

The echoes of the hymn died away,—the ship cut the waves with a rapid wing,—the shore receded from her view. She turned and looked up into the dark, glorious eyes now watching every shadow that flitted over her face, and the present, glowing with life, love, and joy, came rushing back to her heart.

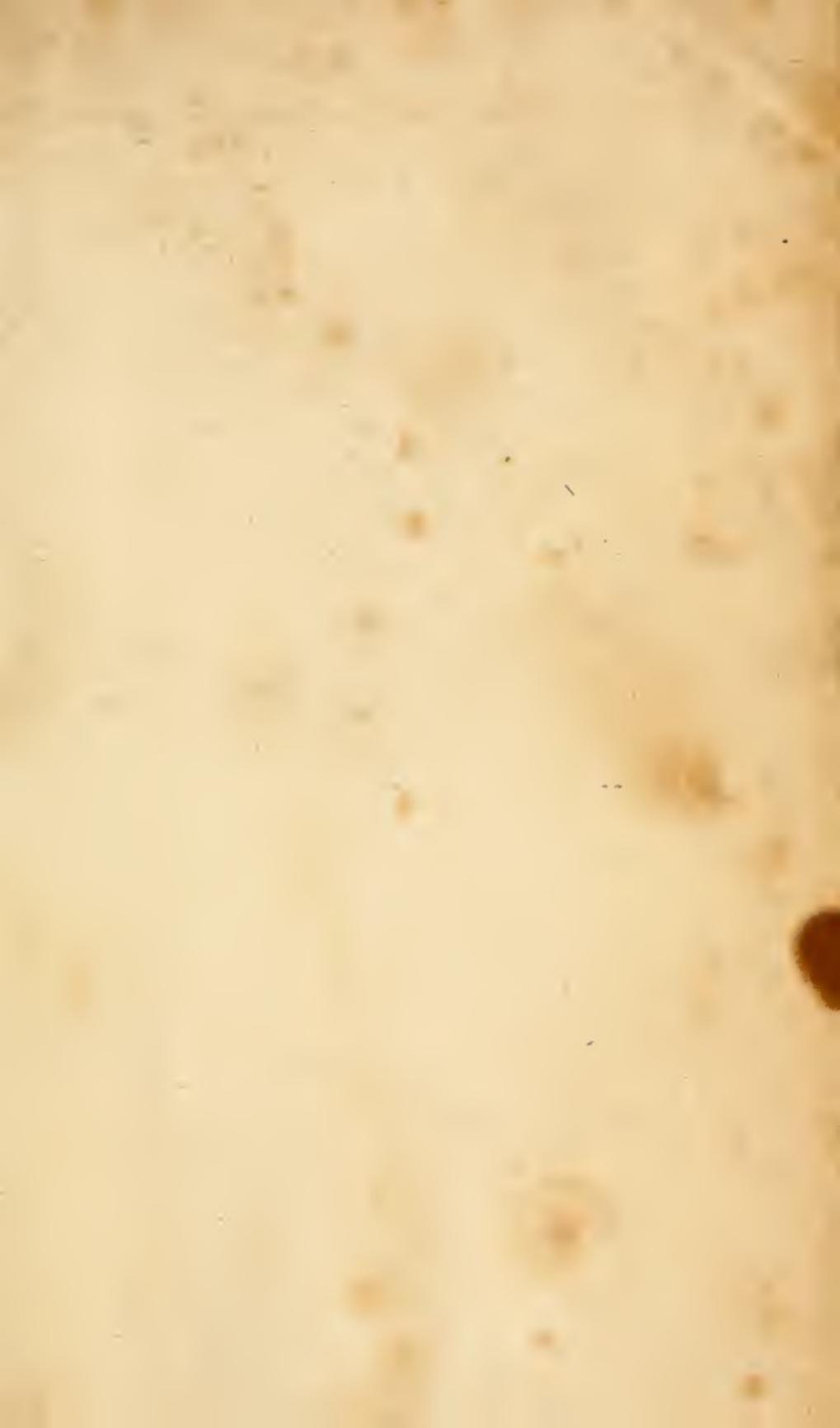
“Oh, Robert!” said she, leaning on his now wedded bosom, while his arms encircled her in a guardian fold ; “henceforth I am all your own. As the great sea surrounds us, separating

us from yonder shore, so your love encircles me, and my soul is borne up on its waves, as the bark upon the swelling billows."

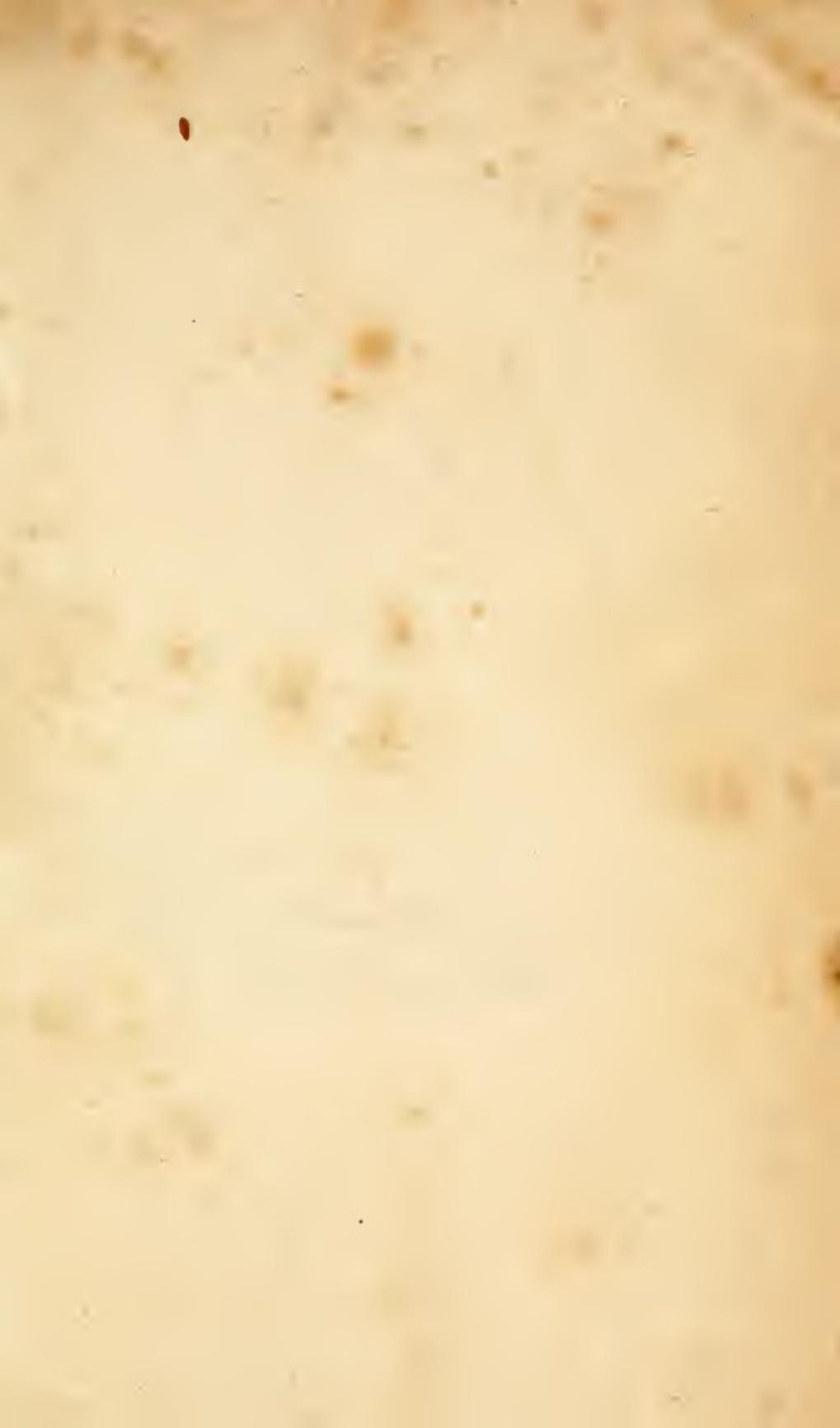
"And as the heavens rest with crowning glory on the ocean," answered Robert, looking up into the resplendent dome arching overhead, "so God's love encompasses and glorifies ours. My bride, my wife,—my own beloved Linda,—great and immeasurable as is my love, it is but an emanation of the divine passion which filled a Saviour's bosom for us. As I now live in thee, and thou in me, so we both live in Him, and He dwelleth with us forever."

Onward the vessel swept—onward and onward—till those who watched its receding motions could no longer discern the dark outlines of Robert's lofty form, or the softer lineaments of his beauteous bride. Fainter and fainter they gleamed through the mist of distance, till nothing but a dim speck appeared between the azure heavens and the dark blue sea.

THE END.









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